

JAMES BUCHANAN  
AND HIS CABINET

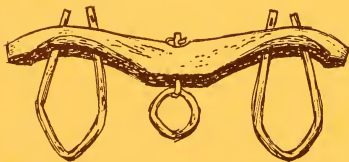
ON THE EVE OF SECESSION

Tone of lit. in this controversial subj.  
where only <sup>as high</sup> as controversy, a calm judic-  
ial tone, a balanced judgment with an evi-  
dent inclination to see the merits of both  
sides, in all the more nec. This Arch-  
facts to achieve.

Refined reasoning on counsel points  
rather footless. Each side filled its theory  
and theory with its motives.

A better flow in the last few 913.  
Yes but this tone was not kept through  
the lit.

## LINCOLN ROOM



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Errata.


Page 37 line 26 for "bonds" read "lands".

Page 142 line 3 for "therein" read "in their State constitutions".

Page 192 line 22 for "income" read "amount".







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*James Buchanan*

# JAMES BUCHANAN AND HIS CABINET

ON THE EVE OF SECESSION

By

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Lincoln Poem

To

MY WIFE AND PARENTS



## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For nearly a decade I have had an interest in the career of James Buchanan. Phases of his life were the subject of research at Syracuse and Clark Universities while studying for my master's and doctor's degree. Since then my interest has continued. The partial outcome of these pursuits is this small volume containing some of the results of my researches. It is intended to supplement the able work of George Ticknor Curtis written some forty years ago. Its purpose is not to please, but to attempt to give a fairer and more sympathetic account of President Buchanan and his Administration than is usually available to the general historian.

A complete list of all who have aided me in my work would be impossible. Among those who have given me of their time and advice, are Dr. George H. Blakeslee of Clark University, where I enjoyed the Fellowship of the American Antiquarian Society; Dr. Alexander C. Flick, former Head of the History Department of Syracuse University, now State Historian of New York; Dr. Edwin P. Tanner, Professor of American History, Syracuse University; Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, President Emeritus of William and Mary College; and Dr. Findlay C. Crawford, Professor of Political Science, Syracuse University.

From the staffs of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Massachusetts, Clark University Library, the Manuscript Division of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the State Library at Richmond, Virginia, I have received the most kind and courteous co-operation.

PHILIP G. AUCHAMPAUGH

DULUTH, MINNESOTA,  
September 1, 1926.





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- Moore: "Works of James Buchanan," edited by J. B. Moore, 12 vols., Lippincott, 1908, 1912.
- Buchanan: "Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of the Rebellion," James Buchanan, Lippincott, 1866.
- Curtis: "Life of James Buchanan," George T. Curtis, Harper & Brothers, 1883.
- A. H. A.: American Historical Association Reports.
- A. H. R.: American Historical Review.
- Covode: House Reports, 36th Congress, 1st Session, No. 648.  
The report on the Covode Investigation.
- Horton: "Life of James Buchanan," R. G. Horton, Derby & Jackson, 1850.
- H. S. P.: Manuscripts of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia.
- L. C.: Manuscripts from the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
- Irelan: "Our Presidents and Their Administrations," Vol. XV, John Robert Irelan, Fairbanks and Palmer, Chicago, 1888.



## CHAPTER ONE

### JAMES BUCHANAN, HIS WORK AND HIS TIMES

Scope of the Study—The Difficulties in Understanding the Middle Period—Writers of History—Back to Yesterday Afternoon—Hostile Critics of Buchanan—Influences of Buchanan's Childhood; College Days; Studies—Buchanan as a Lawyer—Defending Judge Franklin—Practice—Thrift and Integrity—The 25th Section of the Judiciary Act Saved—Buchanan and the Supreme Court—Buchanan as a Political Leader—His Motives for Entering that Field—The Issues in Pennsylvania—Reasons for Buchanan's Nomination to the Presidency—Why he Accepted the Nomination—The Matter of the Patronage—Buchanan as a Diplomat—The Russian Mission—Anglo-American Relations—Buchanan's Far Eastern Policy—Judge Moore's Estimate—Buchanan and Franklin—Affairs in Mexico—Buchanan and the Alaskan Purchase—Buchanan as a Public Speaker—The Presidency—The Slavery Issue—Buchanan on Abolition—Slavery in 1850—Buchanan, State Rights and Southern Rights.

The scope of this study will be to set forth the history of President Buchanan and his Cabinet from the election of 1860 to the close of the Administration. It has been prefaced by two chapters. The first will recapitulate some of the phases of Buchanan's long career in public service. The second will deal with some aspects of the Kansas Question.

To appreciate the psychology of the elder statesmen of Middle Period, a reader must project himself into an era far different from that of the present time. The task is not easy. In those days, before the ideas of nationalism were dominant, Presidents spoke of the Union as a confederacy.<sup>1</sup> The marks of a frontier

<sup>1</sup> James D. Richardson, Editor, "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Washington, 1908; for Jackson, Vol. II, p. 437; Harrison, Vol. IV, p. 16; Polk, *ibid.*, p. 635; for Tyler, John A. Wise, "Seven Decades of Union," Philadelphia, 1881, p. 251; for Buchanan, Curtis, Vol. II, 175.

*Note:* The term "Border State men" is used in this work to designate statesmen coming from the states on Mason-Dixon line who favored compromise and moderation. Men from the Gulf States on the one hand, and from the New England and New England colonized regions on the other,

civilization still lingered even in some of the older states, not to mention the "New West." States Rights and Strict Construction were the creed of the leading party. The ideas of State Sovereignty and, if the need arose, of Secession, were publicly avowed by many of the Senatorial Nestors at Washington.

For our day the men who fought the War between the States are not the lines of the Blue and the Gray of the 60's. Instead they are a staff of arm-chair Generals of History Departments, who, for the most part, have taken up their pens for the winning side. The present public under the gentle guidance of these valiant men will finally reach the point where they will marvel that there was another side of the question. The defeated parties in civil conflicts are twice unfortunate, once on the field of arms, and again in the matter of bards, for few minstrels love to sing of defeats. As a result few remember their valor or their ideals.

Consequently few readers have any interest in an old and honest public servant who served a cause more forgotten than the "Lost Cause" itself. Little wonder that he has been painted in unseemly colors by Northern writers favoring ideas to which he accorded a sincere and unceasing opposition. The South likewise, in its anxiety to place its own cause before the world, had often forgotten the men of the border states, or men who held border state ideas.

In order to understand the situation, we must get away from present-day industrialized and capitalized nationalism, which seems very much in vogue, and go back to the yesterday at sunset, or, perhaps to the yesterday afternoon of our history in which Buchanan's career was largely spent. We must certainly forget the hosts of ideas of such historians as Hay,<sup>1a</sup> Rhodes,<sup>2</sup> and Hart<sup>3</sup> together with their political offspring, the late Henry Cabot

were often more extreme in the views they held. The terms South and North as now used more accurately apply to these more extreme groups.

<sup>1a</sup> John George Nicolay and John Hay, "Life of Abraham Lincoln," New York, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> James Ford Rhodes, "History of the United States," New York, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Bushnell Hart in the New York State Teacher's Association Magazine, March, 1915, p. 51.

David Saville Muzzey, "The United States of America," New York, 1921, Vol. I, pp. 525, 526.



Lodge.<sup>4</sup> The last mentioned individual once delivered a tirade against Buchanan which was far more a tribute to his literary powers than his historical judgment. The speech of another no less loyal Republican, Joseph Cannon,<sup>5</sup> was a most excellent contrast to the florid and biased partisanship so much in evidence in the utterances of the Massachusetts Senator.

Let us return to our sketch of the man who has been hailed by some as the Arnold of the sixties, or by others, hardly less critical, as the champion putty-ball of the White House. The myths of the last charge are scarcely less absurd than those of the first. Messrs. Nicolay and Hay insinuated that all Buchanan ever received was due to political seniority, and that he was actually a huge mass of inability. Now the term ability is very vague. No doubt Buchanan had his limitations, but even the Lincoln cult will at times admit some slight flaw in their own idol. Let the cold facts of Buchanan's rise to political power tell their story.

To those who believe that early childhood determines the man, the following facts will be of interest. Buchanan's father was an able and upright business man of the Pennsylvania frontier. It was he who discovered the fact that the people of Lancaster were rich and prone to go to law.<sup>6</sup> There it was that his son James studied law at a time when the bar of that county had the reputation second to none in the state save Philadelphia, and when Pennsylvania was said to have the smartest lawyers in the land.<sup>7</sup>

The mother of the Buchanan family, Elizabeth Speer Buchanan, had even greater influence in molding the character of the future President. He records that she was always encouraging her sons to match wits with each other to the end that they might make their mark in the world.<sup>8</sup> The parents gave their children the

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Record, Vol. 56, part 8, pp. 7877-7888. A bitter partisan attack of garbled statements made from suppressed evidence. For a better account see Rufus Hardy of Texas, Cong. Rec., Vol. 56, part 12, pp. 430-34.

<sup>5</sup> For this able and excellent speech see Cong. Rec., Vol. 56, part 2, p. 2090.

<sup>6</sup> John Robert Irelan, "Our Presidents and Their Administrations," Chicago, 1888, Vol. XV, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> William Uhler Hensel, "James Buchanan as a Lawyer," Lancaster, Pa., 1911, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Curtis, Vol. I, pp. 2, 3.

best education that the region afforded. Pious instruction of the Presbyterian variety formed part of the parental exhortations with the result that Buchanan developed a strong strain of devotion not untinged with fatalism.<sup>9</sup> A younger brother, Edward Y. Buchanan, became the pastor of a large Episcopal church at Philadelphia. Two other brothers were locally prominent but died before middle life. Thus all the family were successful after the current material and moral standards of the time.

Some might believe from the fact that Buchanan was once expelled from Dickinson College that he was, in youth, wild and irresponsible.<sup>10</sup> Such was not the case. He once wrote that he was not inclined to be wild or dissipated, but that one had to be so considered in order to be a leader. Therefore he attempted to meet the requirements and did. In short, his mother's teaching had had a marked effect although not quite in the desired manner. He had evidently determined to take a leading rôle wherever he found himself. This ambition, curbed by religious training, led him to seek to be highly respectable rather than notorious. Lancaster can boast no more model citizen<sup>11</sup> than the "Sage of Wheatland."

Ambition is not the sole key to success even as the world measures it. One must also have some good fortune, force of character, or intellectual talent coupled with adaptability. The intellectual make-up of Buchanan had become evident at college, and pointed the way to theology, law, or political science had the vocational advisers been present to make their contribution. Curtis noted that Buchanan's student notes indicated a fondness for logic and metaphysics.<sup>12</sup> People with shallow minds do not care for such subjects. The practical side of his nature, abetted by his father's interest, turned these talents in the direction of law. He would have graduated with honors had not the spite of the faculty withheld them.<sup>13</sup> Although not of a vindictive nature,

<sup>9</sup> See William Uhler Hensel, "The Religious Character and Convictions of James Buchanan," Lancaster, 1911, esp. pp. 26-30, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Curtis, Vol. I, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Horton, pp. 282, 283.

<sup>12</sup> Curtis, Vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Curtis, *ibid.*, p. 5.

Buchanan perhaps remembered their attitude when he refused a request for an endowment after the Civil War.

Buchanan's career as a lawyer or, more properly, as a legalist was a brilliant one. In that field he gave many proofs of his great intellect, yet it has been quickly passed over by his biographers because it is less dramatic than the period of his political activities. According to a local historian we find, "During the tide of his practise his name occurs oftener in the Reports of the State than that of any lawyer of his time."<sup>14</sup> "His most notable case as a country lawyer was his successful defense of Judge Franklin before the Senate of Pennsylvania when he was only twenty-five years of age."<sup>15</sup> . . . "His reputation became statewide, and business came in like a flood. At the age of forty he was able to retire from practice to choose the more exciting, but less lucrative, field of politics. He was averse to advising persons to go into politics before they had enough to live on. While he was thrifty enough to collect every cent of his official salary, he paid many of the bills of the White House from his own purse."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the most notable item of this kind was the one for the reception for the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, when he visited this country in 1860. Despite the most despicable efforts of the partisan Covode Committee, instigated to ruin his reputation, nothing could be found to question his integrity.<sup>17</sup> The same statements could not apply to portions of his party, but the methods of Seward, Weed, and the later Grant Administration offered no inspiring contrast to any actions of the Antebellum Democracy.

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, he has left a record which unquestionably places him among the ablest legal minds of the country. His conduct of the famous Peck Impeachment Trial brought him into early prominence. The fact that he lost the case by only one vote (22 to 21) did not lessen the impression which he made. Judge Black, himself one of America's

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Harris, "Biographical History of Lancaster County," Lancaster, 1872, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>15</sup> William U. Hensel, "James Buchanan as a Lawyer," p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 230 note.

<sup>17</sup> Covode Investigation in House Reports, 36th Congress, 1st Session, No. 648. See Minority Report; also Curtis, Vol. II, Chap. XII.

most famous constitutional lawyers, held his argument, "as the greatest legal argument ever made upon the power of a court to punish for contempt, the point upon which the case turned. . . ." <sup>18</sup> The Senate changed the technicalities in the law that were responsible for the acquittal so that no judge ever committed a similar offense. <sup>19</sup>

The glory of Buchanan's legal career was his Minority Report which saved the twenty-fifth section of the Judiciary Act. This was the section which Marshall had used to invalidate State laws which he held unconstitutional. Charles Warren in his work on the Supreme Court has held it as "one of the great and signal documents in the history of American Constitutional Law. . . ." <sup>19a</sup> Those who are of the Calhoun Democracy of course do not hold that it was the best course to take. Contrary to the common view, Buchanan was not at all inconsistent in this position. All through his career the idea of a Court purged of Federalism and filled with States Rights men met with his favor. <sup>20</sup> He did not hesitate, however, to find fault with Taney on a decision which he considered too centralizing. <sup>21</sup> From another angle one could say that his whole career was spent in trying to settle great questions by arbitration of the Courts to prevent appeals to the sword. Of all the lawyer Presidents which the United States have had, none could show a more distinguished record than Buchanan.

Another field of this distinguished Pennsylvanian is that of political leadership. Historians, for the most part, know too little of the world outside of their studies. An exception, perhaps, was President Wilson, who had he been more of a politician and less of a teacher, might have had better fortune with his Peace Treaty. If historians had more experience with the world, they would see that the business of being a political leader requires intellectual acumen in considerable degree. The knack of being prominent in public life for over forty years, twenty of

<sup>18</sup> Philadelphia Press, March 16, 1882.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Harris, "Biographical History of Lancaster County," p. 97.

<sup>19a</sup> Charles Warren, "The Supreme Court in United States History," Boston, 1922, Vol. II, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, Vol. VIII, p. 420.

<sup>21</sup> Warren, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 340.

which were spent as the chief director of the Democratic machine in a state teeming with politicians, including such men as Simon Cameron and Thad. Stevens, was no child's play. True, Buchanan never came forward with new ideas in the Halls of Congress, but his constructive abilities were put to the directing of his political machine instead. His marked social gifts were a great asset in the political game he loved so well.

Buchanan had early tasted of the sweets of politics but had decided to withdraw and devote his attention to his profession. The tragic death of his betrothed drove him to find consolation in a renewed participation in public affairs.<sup>22</sup> Beginning as an insurgent against the Duanes and the Dallases,<sup>23</sup> his ability was forced upon the attention of Jackson and his men. Buchanan was never treated fairly by either Jackson or Polk. He gave them honest service but they were at times suspicious of him. In Jackson's case this was spasmodic, and due to the hostile intrigues of the Blairs.<sup>24</sup> Blaine<sup>25</sup> has well said that Polk was incapable of judging Buchanan fairly, and Polk's diary,<sup>26</sup> probably written for publication, shows that Secretary Buchanan was by far his intellectual superior. Buchanan, on the other hand, always defended Polk's Administration<sup>27</sup> even when he had disagreed with Polk. He greatly respected Mrs. Polk, and it was suggested by Cave Johnson,<sup>28</sup> in 1851, that he marry the widow of the late President. At an earlier time, in writing to Mrs. Catron, a mutual friend, Buchanan had remarked that he might marry someone who would take care of him as he was no longer of romantic mood. That type of love had been cruelly blasted in his youth and lay buried in the grave with the beautiful Miss Coleman. The light and comfort of Buchanan's later years was

<sup>22</sup> Curtis, Vol. I, 18, 19, 22.

<sup>23</sup> *E.g.*, Justin Harvey Smith, "The War with Mexico," Chicago, 1910, p. 282.

<sup>24</sup> For indications of feuds with the Blairs, see Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 408, 413-15.

<sup>25</sup> James G. Blaine, "Twenty Years of Congress," Norwich, Conn., 1886, Vol. I, pp. 57-59.

<sup>26</sup> *E.g.*, Milo M. Quaife, ed., "Diary of James K. Polk," Chicago, 1910, Vol. III, pp. 402-404.

<sup>27</sup> *E.g.*, Curtis, Vol. II, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Roy Franklin Nichols, "The Democratic Machine, 1850-54," p. 77.

his beautiful and accomplished niece, Harriet Lane, whom he had brought up from childhood, and who was his Lady of the Land.

Buchanan's rise to the Presidency was no dark horse affair. It was a fitting tribute to his political skill as a leader. By 1856 he was the man who could best obtain the vote of the Keystone State. With the tide of abolition rising and the possibility of a "Brother's War" increasing, the conservatives looked to him as a possible means of averting the calamity of disunion.

Pennsylvania, because of its need of a protective tariff, was an unruly member of the Democracy. Buchanan had compromised with the demands of the manufacturers by a middle-of-the road policy for over twenty years. According to Stephens Buchanan saw by 1860, that it was impossible and so came out for protection. The question naturally arises as to what would have happened to the party in the state had the Slavery issue not broken the Union at that juncture. Alexander K. McClure,<sup>30</sup> a Republican politician of note, frankly said that it was the tariff that carried the state for the Republicans in 1860. The victory was aided by the Douglas followers, who left nothing undone to secure the defeat of the Democratic Party in Pennsylvania.

It is an error to believe that Buchanan's absence from the country during the Kansas-Nebraska agitation was the main factor in nominating him for the Presidency. Neither did Southern men need an Ostend Manifesto to become acquainted with the candidate from Pennsylvania. Buchanan had protested against the meeting to Pierce.<sup>31</sup> It was more important that Buchanan was the intimate friend of John Slidell,<sup>32</sup> the political leader of the Southwest, and of Henry A. Wise,<sup>33</sup> the able but erratic Governor of Virginia. The latter saw that Buchanan was the only man

<sup>29</sup> Myrta Lockett Avery, "Recollections of Alexander H. Stephens," New York, 1910, pp. 40, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Kelly McClure, "Lincoln and Men of War Times," Philadelphia, 1892, pp. 149, 150.

<sup>31</sup> Moore, Vol. IX, pp. 251, 288-9.

<sup>32</sup> Louis M. Sears, "Buchanan and Slidell," A. H. R., Vol. 27 (July, 1922). This material may also be found in Professor Sears' "John Slidell," Durham, N. C., 1926.

<sup>33</sup> Lyon Gardner Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Richmond, Va., 1884, Vol. II, p. 527.

who, because of his machine, could put Pennsylvania in the Democratic column. This was the main factor that nominated Buchanan in 1856. Had Buchanan possessed the little skill usually attributed to him by the average text-book writer, he would never have been mentioned for the nomination. His old rival Dallas was still available, and might have been chosen. Buchanan had by 1856 lost most of his hankering for Presidential honors. He and Slidell scented trouble<sup>34</sup> in the wind, and this together with his increasing years, made him hesitate.<sup>35</sup>

Finally he decided to run for a number of reasons. The rôle of Henry Clay appealed to him.<sup>36</sup> At heart he was a gentleman and a patriot who desired to bring peace to an agitated country. This was more than could be said of some of his opponents. He felt obligated to his friends who had long supported his candidacy. The idea of abdicating the control of the Pennsylvania Democracy did not appeal to the old leader who had enjoyed forty years of political power.

The patronage was no small cause of the main difficulties of the Buchanan machine in Pennsylvania. Twelve years of hope had created a greater demand than supply, and there were not enough places in the president's gift to satisfy his followers. Buchanan was too strong to be killed, as Harrison had been, but he found plenty to worry about in the matter of appointments.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Louis M. Sears, *ibid.*, A. H. R., Vol. 27, p. 723.

<sup>35</sup> "I can now leave public life with credit. Should I become President the case might become very different, after I shall have worn myself out with the toil and anxiety of the office. Still I do not believe that the next President, should he really be the man for the place, would encounter insuperable difficulties. Unchangeable firmness tempered by prudent discretion would, I think, in a great degree put down the slavery agitation. The question has been settled by Congress, and this settlement should be inflexibly maintained." Buchanan to Harriet Lane, December 28, 1855, Moore, Vol. IX, p. 486.

<sup>36</sup> Horton, p. 426.

<sup>37</sup> "... The number of applicants for office in Pennsylvania has been very great and most of these have been worthy and excellent men to whom I am under political obligations. Under these circumstances, the appointment of one is the disappointment of many; and although I have nominated such a number of Pennsylvanians to the Senate as to have produced at last a titter throughout the Body when such nominations were read, yet this



The South had saved the party, or rather had shown where the party was located on election day,<sup>38</sup> and therefore was left secure in its holdings. Buchanan had a nice way of saying "no," but it was difficult for him to refuse old friends whose abilities entitled them to consideration.<sup>39</sup>

The Pennsylvania Democracy carried the state in 1856, but with great effort against the Cameron-Fremont coalition. Machine organization told, and so Buchanan was at the pinnacle of his fame when, with a troubled heart, he boarded a train for Washington in the spring of 1857. The man whom Letcher of Virginia had hailed as the cleverest leader of the Democratic party not excepting VanBuren had come into his own.<sup>40</sup>

Another phase of Buchanan's career which merits attention is in the field of foreign relations. Professor Fish,<sup>41</sup> who takes a fling at his Presidential policy, concedes his dialectic skill in diplomatic matters. Sent to St. Petersburg because he was too clever for Jackson, he secured a commercial treaty which had eluded the grasp of American ministers for twenty years. Buchanan the bland succeeded where Adams and others had failed. His frank yet affable manner won the favor of the Czar who found in him an agreeable contrast to the evasive European diplomats. His successor William Wilkins of Pennsylvania declared that he had left nothing for him (Wilkins) to do.<sup>42</sup> The final judgment was supplied by the late Andrew D. White, a Republican as early as 1856. He studied Buchanan's papers at St. Petersburg; met Buchanan in London; and formed a very favor-

perhaps only increased the number of disappointed. . . ." Buchanan to William B. Reed, July, 1858, H. S. P., also Moore, Vol. XI.

". . . The power of patronage is a source of weakness and not of strength. Besides the distribution harrows up ones feelings: because so many worthy applicants must be disappointed. . . ." Buchanan to Campbell of Philadelphia, Nov., 1859, H. S. P.

<sup>38</sup> A. H. A., 1916, Vol. II, p. 200.

<sup>39</sup> See 37.

<sup>40</sup> Ann Mary Butler Crittenden Coleman, "Life of J. J. Crittenden," Philadelphia, 1871, Vol. I, p. 195.

<sup>41</sup> Carl Russel Fish, "History of American Diplomacy," New York, 1919, p. 282.

<sup>42</sup> From a campaign biography in L. C.

able opinion of his ability.<sup>43</sup> White noted the excellent conversational powers of Buchanan and declared that he was one of the best conversationalists<sup>44</sup> which he, in the course of a long and eventful life, had met on either side of the Atlantic. An Ohio journalist said, that Buchanan "was the most accomplished diner-out in the state (Pennsylvania) not excepting Morton McMichael of Philadelphia. . . ."<sup>45</sup> His niece realized this gift and encouraged him in it.

On the subject of Anglo-American relations, Buchanan was one of the few Americans of his day who realized the influence of the British Empire in world politics. While he held to the ideas of American expansion in season and out, and may therefore be called an imperialist, he also sought to keep on good terms with England.

While in London, Buchanan enjoyed not a little social prestige, which was in no small degree due to the charm of his niece Harriet Lane.<sup>46</sup> He made a good bargain with the British in Central America which, although not conceding every point in our favor, was more than the British had been disposed to grant since they had won the fruits of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. Dallas, Buchanan's successor, consummated the work which he had advanced. Marcy and Pierce were not over pleased with the capital Buchanan's friends made out of his successes. Perhaps they had intended the appointment to have been his last political appearance. By the end of Buchanan's Administration, he and Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador, had ironed out most of the old grudges of the two countries.

Tyler Dennet,<sup>47</sup> a worshipper of William H. Seward, has sought to elevate his Far Eastern policy at the expense of that of Buchanan. Yet in spite of his remarks, his very criticisms are

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Dickson White, "Autobiography," New York, 1914, Vol. I, pp. 72, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Dickson White, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 448.

<sup>45</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial*.

<sup>46</sup> Curtiss, Vol. II, chap. VII.

<sup>47</sup> Tyler Dennet, "Americans in Eastern Asia," New York, 1923, pp. 263, 264. Mr. Dennet tries to give the credit of the Townsend Mission to Fillmore, yet Buchanan sustained it. It might also be added that the Japanese Mission here was a success of the Buchanan Administration.

in a sense compliments to Buchanan's policies there. He finds fault with Buchanan, because without any use of force, he reaped the same privileges in China as the French and English who made two wars for the same ends. Ambassador Reed is not fairly dealt with by Mr. Dennet. He was not only an able lawyer, but a Professor of American History at the University of Pennsylvania, and a journalist of note. The use of David Lawrence by President Wilson is another instance of the use of able newspaper men for diplomatic work. Buchanan's policy in the Far East was clever and successful as diplomacy goes. In fact it was too clever for Mr. Dennet's taste. It was one of the few times when American diplomacy received something without a cost.

In concluding our sketch of this portion of Buchanan's career, no more authoritative citation can be given than that of John Bassett Moore, one of the outstanding American diplomatists of the last and present century. Long familiar with Buchanan's record, he published, in 1904, an account of his advanced position upon the subject of American citizenship in instances where a naturalized citizen returned to his homeland and had occasion to claim our protection.<sup>49</sup> Judge Moore wrote an able article on this phase of Buchanan's career and published it long before he was employed by the executors of the Lane estate to edit the President's papers. In the preface of that able work he has gone on record as saying that diplomacy was Buchanan's special gift.<sup>50</sup> Such a statement by a master of the craft is more than enough to put to rout the Republican propaganda to the contrary.

Temperamentally, Buchanan had many of the traits of the astute Franklin. While the middle period required no such major diplomatic service, yet Buchanan's triumphs were of much the same variety. They were triumphs of personal character in both instances. Professor Marion M. Miller,<sup>51</sup> although not well informed concerning Buchanan's political activities, gives him due credit for his diplomatic capacities and notes the resemblance. It may be also well to add that had Congress accepted Buchanan's

<sup>49</sup> John Bassett Moore, "The Principles of American Diplomacy," New York, 1905, pp. 276, 277; 279-85.

<sup>50</sup> Moore, Vol. I, Preface, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Marion Mills Miller, "American Debate," New York, 1916; see sketch on Buchanan.

ideas<sup>52</sup> on the Mexican problem, there would probably have been no Napoleonic episode in that region. In the question of the purchase of Alaska, Buchanan was in advance of Seward.<sup>53</sup> He had attempted to negotiate for the purchase of that region, but Congress was sounded and gave forth a hopeless noise. His friend, Senator Gwin of California, was also ardently in favor of the purchase, but, like his chief, saw that the time was not ripe. The House was in the hands of the foes of the Administration and would give no funds for carrying out the purchase. Seward in the popular mind has had too much credit for the idea. Even in his time, and with the aid of the legislative branch, the public had to be educated to the proposition.

As a public speaker, Buchanan has won more credit than he has usually received. Although many portions of his speeches would weary this hurried age, yet the same could be said of many of the passages of Webster and Clay. If the compilers of source books would select only the fine passages of Buchanan's speeches, just as they have done in the case of Webster, many comparable examples of eloquence of a high order would come to light. Buchanan took a leading rôle in most of the debates of his Congressional career. In those speeches, the fire of eloquence is not often present, as he was a man of cautious speech. His more eloquent addresses are of a less political nature, a few of which have come down to us. The same fervor is present in some of his state papers and messages written at the close of his Administration when his heart was stirred to its depths at the prospect of a "Brother's War." For the constitutional historian, Buchanan's productions have a special value, as he had the custom of waiting until both sides had stated their positions in the debate. Then he would arise and sum up both sides before stating his own point of view. The high esteem in which he was held by his constituents, who sent him for ten years to the House, and for three terms to the Senate, is a marked proof of his capacity as an able public servant.

Buchanan's Presidential career has often been held a grand

<sup>52</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 221, 222. Howard Lafayette Wilson, "Buchanan's Proposed Intervention in Mexico," A. H. R., Vol. V, pp. 187-201.

<sup>53</sup> F. A. Golder, "The Purchase of Alaska," A. H. R., Vol. XXV, pp. 411-25, esp. pp. 414, 416, 417.

failure. This is largely due to the point of view held by most Northern writers who live after, rather than before, the victories of the North of the Civil War. The list would also include certain fire-eating Secessionists as Pollard.<sup>54</sup> When one traces the history of the times in which Buchanan spent his public life, and traces his aims and convictions for which he strove in that period, the conclusions must be greatly altered.

As a public man Buchanan never hid his attitude on the subject of Southern constitutional rights. Throughout his entire career, he endeavored to obtain their protection inside the Union. As early as 1826, he had taken his stand, publicly, upon the subject of slavery:

Permit me here, for a moment to speak upon a subject to which I have never before adverted upon this floor, and to which I trust I may never have occasion to advert. I mean the subject of slavery. I believe it to be a great political and moral evil. I thank God that my lot has been cast in a state where it does not exist. But, while I entertain these opinions, I know it is an evil at present without a remedy. It has been a curse entailed upon us by that nation which now makes it a subject of reproach to our institutions. It is, however, one of those moral evils, from which it is impossible for us to escape, without the introduction of evils infinitely greater. There are portions of this Union, in which, if you emancipate your slaves they will become your masters. There can be no middle course. Is there any man in this Union who could for a moment indulge in the horrible idea of abolishing slavery by the massacre of the high-minded, and the chivalrous race of men in the South? I trust there is not one. For my own part I would, without hesitation, buckle on my knapsack, and march with my friend from Massachusetts, (Mr. Everett), in defense of their cause. . . .<sup>55</sup>

Buchanan, then, was not a member of that school who believed "in cutting a white man's throat to set a black man free." At another time he said,<sup>56</sup> "This then is not a question of general morality effecting the consciences of men, but it is a question of constitutional law;" and at another, "Although in Pennsylvania we are all opposed to slavery in the abstract, yet we will never violate the Constitutional compact which we have made with our

<sup>54</sup> *E.g.*, Edward A. Pollard, "The Lost Cause," New York, 1867, p. 96.

<sup>55</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> Horton, p. 426.

sister states. Their rights will be held sacred by us. Under the Constitution it is their question and there let it remain.”<sup>57</sup>

Buchanan's attitude towards the Abolitionists was far more charitable than they or their sons, who have aspired to the writing of history, have been to him. Characterizing them, he said,

The motives of many of them may have been honest, but their zeal was without knowledge. The history of mankind affords numerous instances of ignorant enthusiasts, the purity of whose motives could not be doubted, who have spread devastation and bloodshed over the face of the earth. . . .<sup>58</sup>

This statement did not apply to that class of persons who entered the anti-slavery party for hope of political advancement. For such people the President, and especially his friend, Jeremiah S. Black, had unmitigated contempt.

Buchanan hoped against expectation for the gradual extinction of Slavery which he held had been indefinitely halted by the tactics of Abolition.<sup>59</sup> He did not sympathize with that school of Southern thought which held Slavery a blessing for the negro.

His attitude of which we have been speaking was legal rather than personal. He had no antipathy toward the race as was, and is often in evidence in the North. He asked William Corcoran,<sup>60</sup> a famous banker of Washington, to secure a negro who had been the body servant of President Polk to act in like capacity for himself. In Lancaster he employed a colored barber, who paid the following tribute to Buchanan's character at the time of his death, “Why, sir, he didn't know what it was to give a rough answer to man, woman, or child.”<sup>61</sup> In a number of instances he purchased slaves in Washington, took them into free Pennsylvania, and allowed them to pay him, if they could, from their wages.<sup>62</sup>

During the early part of the struggle of 1850, Buchanan strongly

<sup>57</sup> Buchanan, p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> Moore, Vol. IV, pp. 25, 26.

<sup>59</sup> See letter to Flinn below. Upon Texas and the extinction of slavery in the border states, Sarah Wytton Maury, “The Statesmen of America,” London, 1847, p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Buchanan to William Corcoran, July 14, 1853. Corcoran Mss. L. C.

<sup>61</sup> *New York World*, June 11, 1868.

<sup>62</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 674.



favoured the retention of the Missouri line and its extension through to the Pacific as the best solution of the problem. When the part officially accepted other terms, he withdrew his contention. Writing of the Compromise of 1850 to Cave Johnson, he said, "The Compromise is certainly a hard bargain for the South; but to acquiesce in it for the sake of union is the duty of every patriot."

An able summary of Buchanan's ideas upon the crises and its issues is contained in the following letter: <sup>63</sup>

Wheatland 8 August 1849.

Dear Sir/

I have received your favor of the 6th Instant; and have no advice to give you except to promote your own interests by every honorable means in your power. If the opportunity offers of becoming the publisher of a Democratic paper advancing sound Democratic principles, you ought not to be prevented from embracing it from the mere circumstance that its editor may not be so friendly to me as to some other members of the party. Besides, as publisher you would not be responsible for the Editorials.

As to my sentiments on the Slavery question, they remain unchanged. I think it ought to have been settled by the adoption of the Missouri Compromise. The time, however, has passed for this: and the general ground of non-intervention is that which the Democratic party ought now to occupy. If they should do this, the question will soon settle itself & peace & harmony will be restored to the party & the Union. It is the common ground on which the North & South can unite. Both extremes, Cass on the one hand & Calhoun on the other, hold that Congress have no power to legislate on the question. It is true that Mr. Calhoun & his followers believe that the acquisition of New Territory, even though it should be free as was & is California, enables a slave holder from any of the States to carry slaves into it & to hold them there under the Constitution of the United States. Upon this theory the question must eventually be settled by the Judiciary. But will any slaves be carried there, when all coincide, that the people of the territories, in their sovereign capacity, can regulate this question as they please in their State constitutions preparatory to their admission into the Union? The truth is that so far as the North is concerned the question is a mere humbug. Slavery will never exist in either California or New Mexico.

<sup>63</sup> H. S. P. See also Moore, Vol. VIII, for letters of the period.

Neither Congress, nor a Territorial Legislature, nor a State Legislature will ever re-establish it in either of these Territories. Every well informed man, whether North or South, knows this to be a fact. The North, therefore, by the doctrine of non-intervention have obtained all they can desire & with this they ought to be content. To go further & force the Wilmont proviso or any similar measure through Congress can have no other effect than that of causelessly exasperating the South & disturbing the harmony, if not endangering the perpetuity of the Union. It may be sport for Northern Demagogues to urge such a measure; but it may, also, be death to our brethren of the South. The perpetual agitation of this question excites the slaves by whom they are surrounded, endangers the security of their own persons & that of their families, & may finally drive them to disunion as preferable to their present condition. Their feelings will be the more deeply wounded upon the present occasion from the consciousness that no real question exists: and that the Wilmont proviso, if it should be forced upon them, will only be to gratify a party or sect at the North who have made its agitation a means of obtaining political power, at the expense of all their Southern brethren hold most dear. Indeed, I entertain serious fears that this question, although a mere abstraction in its practical effect on slavery in the Territories, may be the first of a series of measures which will eventually destroy the Union. Entertaining these convictions, I think it would be both inexpedient & unjust to establish a Democratic paper at Washington to advocate a union "between the non-interventionists & non-extensionists," or, in other words, between the advocates of the Baltimore platform & the Buffalo platform. The two things seem to be intirely inconsistent. The one opposes any Legislation whatever on the subject of Slavery; whilst the other insists upon an express provision by law that Slavery shall never be extended.

The establishment of such a paper at Washington would necessarily tend to exasperate the South,—to produce distinct & dangerous geographic parties, & to endanger the Union. God forbid! that when a little forbearance & moderation on the part of the North is all that is necessary,—when by this, they can in fact, accomplish all they desire;—they should notwithstanding, for the sake of gratifying their feelings, honest though they be, apply a torch to the grandest & most glorious edifice which has ever been erected to human liberty on the face of the earth. Providence in its own good time will abolish Slavery; & this will be the sooner accomplished by leaving it, without interference, where the Constitution of the United States has left it.



Thus you have my sentiments briefly of the agitation & thus I have complied with your request.

From your friend,  
Very respectfully,  
JAMES BUCHANAN

William Flinn  
Esquire,  
Washington, D. C.

As Buchanan is admitted to have been one of the most outstanding members of the State Rights school of political thought even by his enemies, it is not necessary to give extensive citations upon that very important subject. A few of his more noteworthy utterances, of profession of that faith, will, however, be noted.

The Favorite Son of Pennsylvania began public life as a Federalist chiefly because of the tariff interests of Pennsylvania. Upon entering the political arena at Washington, he became alarmed at the centralizing tendencies of Marshall and joined the States Rights group. The doctrine, which characterized the period, never gained a more devoted follower. Characteristic is a speech in 1837 in which he boldly and manfully proclaimed himself a champion of the weaker section of the Union, saying,

I have long since taken my stand, and from it I shall not be driven. I do no desire to maintain myself at home, unless I can do it with regard for the rights of the South.<sup>64</sup>

In 1851 he declared,

It is the true mission of the Democracy to resist centralism and the absorption of unconstitutional powers by the President and Congress. The sovereignty of the states and a devotion to their reserved rights can alone preserve and perpetuate our happy system of Government.<sup>65</sup>

In writing to his friend, John Y. Mason of Virginia, of his Presidential prospects in 1851, he summarizes his prospects.

<sup>64</sup> Horton, p. 145.

<sup>65</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 23.

. . . My own prospects are not as fair as they might be. It is true that the Southern and the Southwestern States would be willing to go for me with as great and probably greater unanimity than for any Northern man. I have been fighting their battles on the Slave Question for the last fifteen years & am considered an ultra in the North on this subject: & for this very reason am not so strong in New York & the Eastern States, as I should otherwise have been. Still they cannot say but that I have always been consistent. . . .<sup>66</sup>

He was not deceived as to his lack of popularity in New England then or later. In a letter to his intimate friend Isaac Toucey, he said, "I was never a favorite in New England & I presume that my opinions on the Slavery Question have rendered me less so than formerly. . . ." <sup>67</sup>

Their historians, for the most part, have continued to make the most of his unpopularity in their books since his death.

Buchanan's loyalty to these doctrines, State Rights and Southern Constitutional Rights, practically made him a political martyr. His situation was eloquently stated by John B. Floyd after he had left the Administration in 1861.

. . . Let me come again to the support in justice of what I believe to be that good old man. (Contemptuous laughter.) Was there since God made this earth a man ever placed in so difficult a position as the President of the United States was placed in? Had he not been true to you? Had his administration not been faithful to the South? Had it not been honest and faithful to the whole Union, because it was distinctly and fearless constitutional? I do not come here to censure, gentlemen, but I will say, because it is due to the truth of history, that in that terrific conflict in which he was engaged, he was not as well sustained by the South as he deserved to be. Perhaps it was intended that this present catastrophe should be precipitated upon the country. If they had taken a different course this doubtless would not have come. But it is not in human nature to be as true to another as to the mother that gave you suck. (Laughter.) Mr. Buchanan could not come to the position of the South as a son of the South would. . . .<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Written from Wheatland, June 5, 1851, H. S. P.

<sup>67</sup> Buchanan to Isaac Toucey, Wheatland, Nov. 10, 1851. H. S. P.

<sup>68</sup> *New York Herald*, January 17, 1861.

To the principles of State Rights Buchanan remained true in days that tried men souls. He did not follow the South out of the Union, but he ever strove for her re-admittance with her rights unimpaired. Unlike some Northern Democrats and Whigs, Buchanan never bowed to the increasing popularity of Abolitionism. He remained to the end of his days a sturdy and untractant Democrat.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME ASPECTS OF THE KANSAS PROBLEM

The Scope of the Chapter—The Northern Version of the Problem—The Southern View—Buchanan among the Prophets—The Kansas Situation in 1857—Governor Walker Displeases the Southern Democracy—Walker's Political Ambitions—Walker's Acts in Kansas—Walker Joins the Opposition—He Fails to Achieve His Ambitions—An Analysis of the Lecompton Constitution in Its Relation to Slavery in Kansas—Buchanan and Slavery in Kansas—Buchanan's Political Ideas as Applied to the Situation—His Attitude towards the Changes after 1850—The Supreme Court and their Decision—The Relation of the Decision towards the Administration Policy in Kansas—Buchanan and Southern Rights—The Parties on the Issue—Reports from the Territory—The Opposition to the Constitution—The Toombs Amendment—The English Bill—Douglas Refuses the Peace Pipe—Douglas, rather than Kansas, the Cause for the Divided Party—The Lull before the Storm.

The limited scope of this work cannot include a full treatment of the Kansas question. In view of the epithets which have been so often heaped upon the heads of the members of the Buchanan Administration upon the subject, it is rather needful to discuss some of the more important phases of what Greeley termed "a desultory, wasteful, and no very bloody conflict."<sup>1</sup>

The story of Kansas as usually told in Northern texts of the last fifty years needs no retelling. It is now canonized by virtue of continued repetition. A majority of idealistic persons, victimized by a minority of cruel slaveholders, upheld by a servile Federal authority, which deserted Governor Walker to fawn before the demands of the South—thus the story runs. The Kansas Historical Society reports are an excellent source for anti-slavery ammunition upon this topic.

The people of the South came to believe that they were being defrauded of their just share of the Kansas-Nebraska Territory

<sup>1</sup> Horace Greeley, "The American Conflict," Hartford and Chicago, 1865, Vol. I, p. 244.

by a Yankee trick known as the Immigrant Aid Society. This Society poured a stream of unnatural immigration into Kansas. Its able managers shrewdly endeavored to make anti-slavery fanaticism pay for itself as it went along.

The situation which faced Buchanan and the Democratic Party in 1857 was not one of his desire or making. Like Saul of old, he had been among the prophets, and like Cassandra, he was never heeded. As early as 1850 he had expressed a fear that two kinds of immigrants would make their way into the territories as a result of the Compromise of that year. There<sup>2</sup> . . .

These opposite convictions will necessarily produce dissention & strife between the parties, the one struggling to restrain the Slaves, the other to emancipate them. Is there not therefore the danger that the agitation which now prevails throughout the States may only for a brief season be transferred to the territories to be brought back from thence with increased acrimony? I have no doubt Slaves will be taken there for the purpose of trying out the Question if for no other. . . .

The South had, however, appeared to be satisfied with the doubtful values of the Compromise, and Buchanan had let the matter drop.

The years that followed showed the repeal of the Missouri line to have been an act of doubtful expediency. What was virtually a small-scale civil war developed in Kansas Territory. Upon assuming the Presidency, Buchanan found a Territorial Government established, functioning, and sanctioned by Congress but unpopular with the anti-slavery agitators. In contrast to the first governmental machinery was the so-called Topeka Government, supported by the anti-slavery elements, but having no legal status.<sup>3</sup> Few men cared to undertake the Governorship of so distracted a region.

At the outset of the Buchanan Administration, Robert J. Walker, a one-time resident of Mississippi, but a native of Pennsylvania, reluctantly accepted the thorny task. The appointment was unfortunate. For though Walker was a man of parts, having made a good record as Secretary of Treasury in the days of Polk, he was a man of far-reaching personal ambition, and lack-

<sup>2</sup> Buchanan to Toucey, Wheatland, July 2, 1850. H. S. P.

<sup>3</sup> See the reply to the Silliman letter, Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 199-201.

ing in patience and tact. He was supposed to keep aloof from both factions in the Territory. Soon, however, Southern leaders read that Walker had made some statements unfavorable to the institution<sup>4</sup> of slavery in Kansas, and seemed to strongly favor a popular vote, or ratification, on the work of the Lecompton Convention. All this, they were convinced, indicated that Walker was the friend of those who were trying to keep them from their share of the territories. Seward<sup>5</sup> was convinced that Walker was trying to make political capital for himself out of the Kansas question. The Cabinet soon came to the same conclusion<sup>6</sup> and voiced it to their chief.

Walker's ambitions and policies were ill-calculated to insure success. He tried to control Buchanan's choice of appointments in Kansas;<sup>7</sup> he failed to persuade the Free State men to vote for delegates for the Lecompton Convention with the result that it was in hands of the pro-Slavery men.

The failure was not unnatural, due to the heated condition of the public mind at the time. He meddled with the affairs of the Territorial Legislature, ousting some of the members whose right to sit was doubtful. The pro-Slavery members of the Convention held that such actions of Walker were plain usurpations of executive power to aid anti-Slavery. He next questioned an in-

<sup>4</sup> *E.g.*, Robert Toombs to W. W. Burwell, July 7, 1857, A. H. A., 1916, Vol. II, p. 433.

<sup>5</sup> "There is some room to think that our political affairs at home are to undergo some new complications. Mr. Robert J. Walker and his Secretary, Mr. F. P. Stanton, are uncommon men, independent, self-seeking, and quite ambitious. They don't mean to play parts subordinate and ministering to the ambitions of Cass, Buchanan, March, Douglas, or other aspirants as their predecessors have, but to establish a power of their own. Walker sees his way through the governorship of Kansas to the Senate, and through the Senate to the Presidency. I am to give a private conference today at one. He lets me think, if I will, that he will be content to let Kansas reverse the contest in favor of freedom only stipulating gentleness, prudence and indemnity. I shall be wiser, and perhaps he, after we meet. But this, too, is for your own private ear." Seward in a letter to his son just before Walker left for Kansas, Frederick W. Seward, "Seward at Washington," New York, 1891, Vol. II, p. 299. This shows that the South had need to watch Walker.

<sup>6</sup> See letters of Cass and Floyd in appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Walker to Buchanan, June 28, 1857, H. S. P.

junction of a Democratic judge<sup>8</sup> who ordered him to re-seat the same members. His unpopularity with the Convention became so marked that he lost every vestige of influence he had with them, and left the Territory.<sup>9</sup> Through such tactless conduct, all the influence of the Administration was lost where it was most needed. Buchanan<sup>10</sup> had hoped that Walker would get the Convention to send the entire Constitution back to the voters, but Walker had failed, and instead of retiring gracefully, proceeded to blame the Administration, or its friends, for his lack of success, and to further his own interests<sup>11</sup> with its opponents.

<sup>8</sup> Judge Cato, see Sen. Ex. Doc., 35 Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. I, no. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Covode, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> Covode, pp. 116, 117.

<sup>11</sup> Walker realized that his step in throwing out returns of the legislature had been one of very doubtful authority. Nevertheless he was persuaded by George W. Brown (and perhaps others), a Free Soil Democrat from Pennsylvania, and editor of the "Herald of Freedom," that in case he did not throw out those returns a civil war supported by the Republican party in the North would immediately result. Brown later claimed that he did not believe all he told Walker. The Governor evidently believed that there was no way for his ambitions left but to join the conservative wing of the Anti-Slavery party. Furthermore he did not intend to lose anything by this venture. On this occasion he said to Brown: ". . . And, Mr. Brown, I am frank to say that I have political aspirations of my own, after Kansas is admitted into the Union. My people in the South have gone back on me, and my future hope of position rests with the people of Kansas. Will you aid me in your paper?"

"When we are admitted a State under other than the proposed Lecompton Constitution, if there is any place in the government you wish, from the United States Senator down, if I can aid you to it, it is yours."

Walker dictated an editorial, supposed to have come from a third party, for the *Herald*, calling him, the Governor, to throw out the bogus returns. Shortly afterwards, accompanied by Stanton, he inspected the districts. Stanton was psychologically a Free-state convert, as he had resolved to settle among them. He seemed to care little for the legalities of the situation. Seward's remarks had proved correct. (George W. Brown, "Reminiscences of Robert J. Walker," Rockford, Illinois, 1902. See also by the same author, "False Claims of Kansas Historians Truthfully Corrected," Rockford, 1902.) Mr. Brown ably presents the case for the pacific wing of the Anti-slavery group. He was not correctly informed of the state of things at Washington nor does he say much of the Fort Scott troubles in his account of Walker. He shows that certain press agents thrived in making trouble by abetting the radical Anti-slavery element. This would



Walker was not asked to resign. It was suggested to Buchanan that he be transferred.<sup>12</sup> His resignation was a political document<sup>13</sup> against the Administration because it had refused to accept his advice, and force a popular ratification on the Lecompton Constitution. Cass,<sup>14</sup> in reply, gave the Governor a well-merited rebuke. Walker's successor, his Secretary Stanton (not Edwin M. Stanton), was of like mind, and, in defiance of instructions from Washington, convened the Territorial Legislature before it was due. For this affrontery he was removed.

After their break with the Administration, Walker and Stanton gloried in the "martyrdom" (?) before appreciative audiences.<sup>15</sup> Having reached Washington, Walker accused the Cabinet of plotting against him.<sup>16</sup> All such accusations were in error, although he was not popular with that body.<sup>17</sup> Buchanan even took pains to invite him to the White House,<sup>18</sup> but such courtesy did not prevent Walker from trying to injure him in the Covode Investigation.

It was only human for Walker to have political ambitions. He stood for himself first and the Administration afterwards. It is one of the absurdities of history to consider him a victim of the Administration, when he was the victim of his own dreams of a grand rôle. The Administration's attitude was quite the opposite to the impression he tried to create. Walker's checkered policy was futile. He was not greatly elevated by his new allies. It in turn indicate that the files of the Abolition newspapers of the time would not be very accurate history, *e.g.*, *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> *E.g.*, Frances Pickens to Buchanan, White Sulphur Springs, Va., August 5, 1857, H. S. P.

<sup>13, 14</sup> See Sen. Ex. Doc. 35 Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. I, no. 8, p. 132 seq.

<sup>15</sup> For a typical speech by Walker, see Hartford Weekly Courant, March 21 and 28, 1860.

<sup>16</sup> *E.g.*, Covode, p. 114. Douglas asserted that there was a Cabinet plot to ruin him (Douglas), Horace White, "Life of Lyman Trumbul," Boston, 1913, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> *E.g.*, Cobb, A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 427; Thompson has shown to have favored complete submission, or if that failed partial submission. On a letter from Wise to Buchanan charging him with a plot, he wrote that it was a lie. See Wise-Buchanan with Thompson's notes, Dec. 17, 1857, H. S. P. See Appendix.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, Vol. X, p. 321; Covode, p. 114.



would perhaps be possible for a biographer to build much of the history of Kansas in 1857 around the fires of his unrealized hopes. In 1876 he died, his greater ambitions still unfulfilled.

Much ado has been made by foes of the Buchanan Administration over the fact that the Lecompton Constitution was not entirely referred to the voters before it was presented to Congress by the President and his party. There has also been the cry of trickery over the material that was submitted to the voters. The voters had been given the privilege of voting for the Constitution with or without slavery. If they voted the latter, the remaining parts of the Constitution protected the existing slave property already in Kansas and amendment of the said portion was prohibited for some years. All such language was after all vain talk, and verbiage in view of the actual situation. Still it was enough to keep or to give an excuse for keeping the Free State vote away from the polls, and to send the Constitution with slavery to Washington. It also gave the foes of the Administration the opportunity to raise a campaign cry of trickery in Kansas.

Buchanan's reasons for trying to rush Kansas into statehood by means of the Lecompton Constitution were political for the most part, but he had good legal reasons for his course as well. "The Constitution was republican in form, and it had been voted on in a free and open ballot, which the Convention had directed to be taken on the all important question of slavery."<sup>18a</sup> Gradual abolition would have resulted had the people voted for the Constitution "without Slavery."<sup>19</sup> Such a plan had once satisfied the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Organic Act did not require the submission of any of the work of the Convention to the voters.<sup>20</sup> True, the North had generally done so for sometime in the case of state constitutions, but the South had frequently held such proceedings unnecessary. Even in Northern states, earlier precedents of the same nature could be found.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18a</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 206.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson Leverett Spring, "Kansas," Boston, 1892, p. 223.

<sup>20</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 201.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Mayes, "Life of Lucius Quintus Cassius Lamar," Nashville, Tenn., 1896, p. 68 note.

It must have been plain to the intelligent enemies of the Administration that they were making "much ado about nothing," or else casting dust in the eyes of their followers. Most of the Southern leaders in Congress openly said that Kansas would never become a slave state.<sup>22</sup> Once Kansas was invested with the rights of a sovereign statehood, the Federal Government could no more concern itself with its domestic institutions such as the property of its slaveholders. Federal troops and officials would leave the region. The people of Kansas could do whatever they pleased with their own affairs. The Bill of Rights of the Lecompton Constitution declared that the people could alter or abolish their form of government. Whatever distasteful provisions on the subject of slavery the Constitution might contain, they were completely at the mercy of their sovereign will. No fetters could be placed upon the powers of the people of Kansas acting in a sovereign capacity.<sup>22a</sup> Buchanan indicated all these things<sup>23</sup> clearly, but the Republicans were determined that their pet issue should not be thus easily laid at rest. Black expressed the sentiments of most Democrats when he wrathfully alluded to the matter as "the knavish trick of the abolitionists in preventing a vote on slavery, by which it would have been expelled from Kansas, and the whole trouble settled in the way they pretended to wish."<sup>24</sup>

To the loyal Democrats of the time, much of the Congressional opposition came not from pious ignorance or bigoted fanaticism, but from the most cynical and sinister hypocrisy. Better that the Kansas issue be kept alive to bleed, than that the Republican party perish from lack of nourishment. Better still, the Administration might be badly injured by the continued bleeding.

Instead of censuring the President for trying to make a state of Kansas, by means of the Lecompton Constitution, for the sake

<sup>22</sup> *E.g.*, see Crump letter in appendix.

<sup>22a</sup> The State of New York was then, "governed under a constitution framed and established in direct opposition to the mode prescribed by the previous constitution." J. Buchanan Henry, editor, "The Messages of President Buchanan," New York, 1888, p. 189.

<sup>23</sup> For Buchanan's Messages see Moore, Vol. X, pp. 179-192.

<sup>24</sup> Chauncy F. Black, "Essays and Speeches of Jeremiah S. Black," New York, 1885, p. 273.

of peace in the Union, it would be more just to blame the Free State voters of Kansas, who, by staying from the election of delegates to the Lecompton Convention, gave the Lecompton Constitution a chance to come into existence.

It might also be mentioned, that Buchanan had in his possession reports of atrocities by Anti-slavery persons which rivalled those gruesome accounts, so carefully preserved to us in texts, by Anti-slavery historians.<sup>25</sup> Some of the protests were written, not by Southern partisans, but by a Pennsylvania Democrat, whom Buchanan had made a Federal judge in the Territory. To charge Buchanan with desiring to see the institution of Slavery established in Kansas Territory, would be to allow the emotions to usurp the realm of one's historical judgment. It has already been shown that he was, at first, opposed to the repeal of the Missouri line, and that he hoped for the gradual extinction<sup>26</sup> of slavery which he had publicly held to be a social misfortune.<sup>27</sup> The remarks of Buchanan's friend, Judge Catron, cast further light upon this phase of the subject:

No, there was no expectation, and, I do not believe, desire, on the part of the present administration, to make it a slave state, but as he (Buchanan) had already been pestered to death with it, he resolved to make it a state as soon as possible, and thus be rid of it, let them fight it out as they liked. In this mood the Southern members found him when the news came of the Lecompton Constitution being framed, and he committed, thinking no doubt that Douglas would be hot for it, and that there would be no general opposition in his own party to it.<sup>28</sup>

It is also pertinent that Buchanan gladly supported<sup>29</sup> Governor Denver, Stanton's successor, although Denver was no friend of slavery, and continued many of the policies of Walker. Denver<sup>30</sup> had tact, and was not trying to make a political record. He was respected by the people, and left conditions far better than he

<sup>25</sup> See the appendix for a letter of Judge Williams to Attorney General giving a detailed account of some Lane outrages in the Territory.

<sup>26</sup> *E.g.*, see letter to Flinn above.

<sup>27</sup> Buchanan, Introduction, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Horace White, "Life of Lyman Trumbull," Boston, 1913, pp. 84, 85.

<sup>29</sup>, <sup>30</sup> Moore, Vol. X, p. 203; for address by Denver see Kas. Hist. Association Rpt., 1883-4, pp. 351, 352, 362.

found them. The next Governor was Samuel Medary, a Northern Democrat, under whom the political situation continued to improve. In February, 1861, Kansas became a state. At that time Buchanan signed the bill admitting Kansas under a Free-state constitution. This was perfectly consistent with his attitude in the earlier phases of the question, and again indicated, that whatever preference he held for the Lecompton Constitution, was not due to its slavery provisions.

The motives of Buchanan's policy during this period have been hinted at, but still remain for a more careful analysis. Anyone who had followed Buchanan's political record would have noticed certain out-standing habits of thought which were bound to show themselves in his Kansas policy. There was his long-rooted and ever deepening conviction that the Abolitionists and their political allies, the Republicans, were bringing the country to its ruin. His publicly proclaimed devotion to securing the South her constitutional rights in the Union has already been shown.<sup>31</sup> He loved the Union, his political fortunes were entwined with its perpetuity. He also knew that no Union could peacefully endure where the property rights of a large portion of its inhabitants and perhaps their lives would not be protected. The application of these three ideas: the convictions of the dangers of Abolition to the Union; the preservation the Union; the protection of Southern constitutional rights therein, plus a strong feeling of friendship, born of years of acquaintance with Southern statesmen, were bound to come into play in any situation like that of the problem of Kansas.

It has already been shown that Buchanan was opposed to stirring up the Slavery Question. Despite his advice,<sup>32</sup> the party had accepted the Compromise of 1850 and the later Kansas-Nebraska Bill. In each case he had accepted a decision which he deemed of doubtful advisability. He was a strict party man, and said in 1860 that he had never bolted a Democratic ticket.<sup>33</sup>

As early as 1850, Buchanan had been among those who hoped

<sup>31</sup> *E.g.*, Moore, Vol. VIII, p. 372.

<sup>32</sup> *E.g.*, A. H. A., Vol. V, pp. 101-2, Moore, Vol. VIII, p. 372, letter to Flinn above.

<sup>33</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 290.

that the Supreme Court would settle the question<sup>34</sup> of the status of slaves in the territories. It was no idle expression when he said, in 1856, in his Letter of Acceptance, that he accepted the nomination, not as James Buchanan, but as the candidate of the Democratic Party.<sup>35</sup> He could remember the time when he had been at first opposed to the changes of 1850.

The Cincinnati platform of 1856 had not answered the question of whether the Federal Constitution protected slavery in the territories before the people prepared their state constitution for the purpose of entering the Union. The case of Dred Scott was on the docket, and men of States Rights views were on the bench. Many Democrats looked to a decision which, even if not entirely satisfactory, would get acceptance and thus preserve unity of the party.

Buchanan was among those who sought to be delivered by the Decision. His friend Catron<sup>36</sup> posted him while he was still President-elect because he was very anxious to *steer* by its compass. It was an ill stroke of fate, however, when due to sickness of one of the Judges, the decision was delayed until after his inauguration. That gave his foes the chance to cry conspiracy. There was none, but the majority of the court, goaded by the minority, decided to declare themselves fully on all the points involved. It was the minority who first decided to do this. The result was that the decision gave protection to all slave property as well as other property while territories remained in their territorial condition.

Buchanan had long felt that a crisis was coming. He and Slidell<sup>37</sup> had discussed it before the campaign. To a Pennsylvania friend he had said in 1856:

I had hoped for the nomination in 1844, again in 1848, and even in 1852, but now I would hesitate to take it. Before many years the Abolitionists will bring war upon the land. It may come during the next Presidential term.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Flinn letter above.

<sup>35</sup> Moore, Vol. X, p. 81.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, Vol. X, pp. 106, 107, and Catron letters, H. S. P.

<sup>37</sup> Louis M. Sears, "John Slidell," or A. H. R., July, 1922, p. 723.

<sup>38</sup> Burr on Black, Philadelphia Press, March 16, 1882.

In 1856 Buchanan had privately and publicly said that his mission would be to destroy sectionalism everywhere, and bring back the good old times.<sup>39</sup> To his mind and many of those of conservative leanings, his election had saved the Union.

The decision of the Court had now settled the question.<sup>40</sup> The status of slavery in the territories had passed from the realm of politics to the realm of law. Slavery was henceforth a question of property perhaps more than one of politics. People who would still question the matter were, to Buchanan, the enemies of law and order.<sup>41</sup> There are writers who believe that his policy was actuated solely by the desire to avert disunion. If this were the sole reason, it would have been sufficient, and would have been only his plain duty, as the South was only asking for its legal rights. Yet that fact alone does not thoroughly state the President's position. It would neglect the fact that he had been the willing advocate of Southern rights for nearly half a century. True, he was wont to use the Union argument, and in all sincerity, on Northern men, who cared more for their own political fences<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *E.g.*, address to the students of Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster, Pa., reported in the *New York Herald*, Dec. 3, 1856.

<sup>40</sup> *E.g.*, Curtis, Vol. II, p. 206.

Buchanan in 1860: "... The Supreme Court of the United States have decided,—what was known to us all to have been the existing state of affairs for fifty years,—that slaves are property. Admit that fact, and you admit everything. . . ." Curtis, Vol. II, p. 293.

Buchanan, in a draft of his first message on Kansas, denied what Douglas still tried to hold after the Decision,—that the lack of local regulations, or hostile local legislation would keep slavery from the Territories. Buchanan held:

"It has been suggested that the Legislature of the Territories by hostile enactments. . . Territorial legislature might interfere . . . might virtually abolish such property in slaves indirectly by. . .

Besides it is not to be presumed that the members of such bodies would resort to such an expedient in violation of their solemn oaths to support the constitution, and if they did, such acts would be annulities and have no effect.

What the constitution recognizes to be property, the Constitution can protect through the agency of the Federal Courts in despite of Territorial legislation. . . ." (H. S. P.)

<sup>41</sup> Buchanan in Moore, Vol. XII, p. 332.

<sup>42</sup> *E.g.*, Covode, p. 271.



than for a square deal to the other section of the Union. On the other hand, the excitement in the South has been too often underestimated by Northern writers.

The people of Kansas had lost all of the President's confidence as a result of their failure to vote for delegates to the Lecompton Convention. The South was under the spell of the Fire-eaters, who claimed that their section had been tricked out of its share of the Territories. Southern leaders at Washington felt forced to demand the Lecompton Constitution, although they said Kansas could never become a slave state.<sup>43</sup> In the whole struggle, the South showed too much reading of Sir Walter Scott, and his quick-to-draw heroes, while the Republicans mixed the most bigoted fanaticism with the most selfish hypocrisy.

The Republicans were stubbornly determined to live and defy the Decision of the Court which had been to them almost a political death sentence. Too many of them used Abolition as a means to political ends. In the minds of many honest Democrats, they were guilty of the most incendiary hypocrisy.<sup>44</sup> The expression of Black has already been noticed. Daniel S. Dickinson, the fearless leader of the Hunker Democracy in New York State, ably expressed the prevailing opinion of the conservative Democrats.

The opposition, just now so fretfully conspicuous, was determined on before you were inaugurated, and the development is made through the Kansas question, because it promised better returns than anything else. It was the imperative duty of every good citizen, and especially of every Democrat, to aid you in abating this Kansas nuisance by every energy within his power, and to help throw it out of the doors of Congress, and send it home for adjustment there, at the earliest moment. But instead of this, Senators and Governors unite with, nay out-Herod the Greeleys, Jim Lanes and Topekaites generally, in casting fresh fire-brands into the federal legislature and embroiling the country over abstract and bootless issues. . . .<sup>44a</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *E.g.*, Slidell in John Savage's "Living Representative Men," Philadelphia, 1860, p. 446. See also Crump letter in appendix.

<sup>44</sup> See quotation from Black above, also his letter to Judge Woodward, Chapter IV.

<sup>44a</sup> Daniel S. Dickinson to Buchanan, Dec. 26, 1857. H. S. P.

Reports from the Territory coming in to the Administration then, and during the debate, showed the President the need of prompt and the most vigorous action. No Democrat, no true lover of peace, failed to see that Kansas once admitted, the choicest weapons of the Republican's would be taken away;<sup>45</sup> the Democratic Party saved; and the Union preserved. The Republicans saw it equally well, and in their zeal for power used every means to prolong the bleeding in Kansas.<sup>46</sup> Many obscure persons who knew little of party politics, and who failed to understand the technicalities of the issue, felt that they were in a holy cause. Such self-deception, however, could hardly have motivated the more practical of their leaders.

In view of all these considerations, it was but natural that Buchanan and his followers should seek to put the matter through Congress as soon as they could. Douglas came out in opposition. This made him so popular with Greeley that, had it not been for Lincoln, he might have become the adopted member of the Republican party in his home state. In order to win back the support in the North, the Administration aided by Toombs<sup>47</sup> tried to pass an explanatory amendment, which would give the people additional assurance that they could do as they pleased when they had become a state. Such assurance was superfluous, but there was hope that it might remove opposition to the issue. When this plan did not succeed, the Administration tried the English Bill.

This bill sent the Lecompton Constitution back to the voters with a land grant. If Kansas was to vote in the negative, she was to remain a territory until her population was sufficient to send a member to the House. Professor Frank Haywood Hodder<sup>48</sup> has exposed the myth that this bill was a bribe to the people of Kansas because it offered them a land grant along with the Lecompton Constitution. Professor Hodder has shown that Mr. Henry Wilson, who made the charge, in his "Rise and Fall of the Slave Power," rearranged a speech of one of the members of

<sup>45</sup> *E.g.*, Moore, Vol. X, p. 225.

<sup>46</sup> See 44a and Williams letters in appendix.

<sup>47</sup> A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 432. Toombs' note is also in H. S. P.

<sup>48</sup> A. H. A., 1906, Vol. I, pp. 201-210.



Congress to suit his purposes; that the grant was not unusual in size, being identical to that offered Minnesota in the year previous; that the final bill of 1861 making Kansas a Free State, which was signed by Buchanan, contained like provisions; that Congress under the Republicans adopted the policy of delaying would-be States until their population was sufficient to send a member to the House; that no one claimed that Kansas would ultimately lose the land if she rejected the Constitution.

The remarks of Buchanan, and of his Cabinet, give ample proof of the real purpose of the Bill. Buchanan wrote Denver,<sup>49</sup> the able and moderate successor of Stanton and Walker, in the initial stages of the struggle that if Lecompton failed, no settlement could be reached before 1860, with the results that the material interests of Kansas would be "the sport and capital of the Black Republicans in the Presidential Election of 1860."<sup>49</sup> Black said of the English Bill, "Those of them who were willing to give a fair support to the administration, and to regard the English Bill as a settlement, ought to be conciliated, treated kindly, and supported."<sup>50</sup> Post Master General Brown seems to have let it generally be known that any person in rebellion against the party would be welcomed if they stood for the Bill.<sup>51</sup> Yancey's biographer states that it was a concession demanded by Buchanan of the Southern Democracy to save the party in the North.<sup>52</sup> That statement really sums up the whole matter. Quitman's biographer states practically the same thing.<sup>53</sup>

Douglas, according to news forwarded to Buchanan by Senator Gwin of California,<sup>54</sup> was undecided for about a week as to whether to smoke the peace pipe or not. Then, due to pressure brought upon him by Senator Broderick (Gwin's political enemy), and others of his group, he refused it. This was a great misfortune to the Northern Democracy. By this time the Free-

<sup>49</sup> Buchanan to Governor Denver, Moore, Vol. X, p. 203.

<sup>50</sup> Covode, pp. 323, 324.

<sup>51</sup> Covode, p. 229.

<sup>52</sup> John Witherspoon Dubose, "Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey," Birmingham, Ala., 1892, p. 355.

<sup>53</sup> John Francis H. Claiborne, "Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman," New York, 1860, p. 274.

<sup>54</sup> Note of Buchanan from Senator Gwin. H. S. P.

state men in Kansas were ready to vote and the Lecompton Constitution was rejected. Governor Medary,<sup>55</sup> Denver's successor, was able to report, at the close of 1858, that Kansas was behaving herself, and was no longer a subject for Buchanan's enemies to weep over.

In 1861 Buchanan signed the bill admitting Kansas as a free-state.<sup>56</sup> His attitude had been consistent from the beginning, for during the entire trouble he had striven for a settlement which would be accepted in all parts of the Union.

It was the ambition of Douglas, or perhaps his desire to sustain himself in Illinois, far more than the echoes of "Bleeding Kansas," which fatally divided the Democracy.

In spite of the hostile criticism then and since, President Buchanan had the satisfaction of having followed the iron path of public duty. The storm had passed, and the sky seemed to clear, but it proved to be a lull before an even greater tempest.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

### LETTERS PERTAINING TO KANSAS AFFAIRS AND CABINET RELATIONS

*Note:* Composition of the Cabinet: Buchanan had carefully selected his Cabinet with attention to political reasons and social traits. The latter he held essential in getting on well with the Congressmen. Cass, although he had a certain amount of Buchanan's dislike for his friendly relations with the hostile Cameron group in the Keystone State, was urged by Slidell as the best available man to represent the Northwest. Buchanan was virtually his own Secretary of State, and it was arranged for Buchanan to appoint Cass's principal assistant in the department, John Appleton of Maine, a friend of long standing. Cobb was a Georgia "Union Saver" who had been prominent in his state and in Congress. Floyd was popular with the Wise faction in Virginia. Thompson was a friend of the Davis group in Mississippi. Aaron V. Brown, Post-Master General, was an amiable and wealthy native of Tennessee. He died in 1859 and was suc-

<sup>55</sup> Medary to Buchanan, Dec. 15, 1858; Jan. 4, 16; Feb. 21, 1859. H. S. P.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, V, pp. 646, 647.

ceeded by Thompson's friend, Joseph Holt of the same state. J. Glancey Jones of Pennsylvania had been slated for the cabinet; but, due to the opposition of the Forney faction, he was induced to withdraw, and Jeremiah Sullivan Black, a long acquaintance of Buchanan, was selected. He had been more of a jurist than a politician, and for that reason was the more acceptable. Isaac Toucey, a brilliant Connecticut lawyer and politician, and Nathan Clifford of Maine were considered. Slidell favored Toucey, who had been for a time Attorney-General under Polk. He was finally chosen, and Clifford was, in 1859, put on the Supreme Court bench, where he fully justified Buchanan's opinion of his fitness for the post. The failure to find a Cabinet place for the journalist, John W. Forney, because of Southern opposition to him, caused Buchanan considerable trouble in Pennsylvania. Forney became an ardent Republican at a later date, and long continued in politics under their banner.

When Wise, to Buchanan's sorrow, left him over the Kansas dispute, Floyd remained zealously loyal. So did the Tyler faction in Virginia. Through Toucey's overtures the Hunter faction, the rivals of Wise in Virginia, became closely identified with the Administration until the latter part of 1860. Floyd and Black had a disagreement over money due to a contractor named DeGroot. Floyd claimed more money was due DeGroot than Black said he was entitled. After reading over the evidence, it is hard to see that Floyd was not the more correct. A large sum of money, however, was involved, and when Floyd, in spite of an opinion by Black, tried to pay the claim, Buchanan, who knew Floyd was a poor book-keeper, vigorously sustained the Attorney-General's opinion.

In the main, due to Buchanan's tact in selecting his men, they were most congenial and harmonious until they came to the parting of the ways in 1860. The rest of the story appears below. The letters here enclosed show the very strong friendly ties existing between the Cabinet and their chief.

It will be noticed that the Douglas faction did not have any intimate friends in the cabinet. Slidell had warned Buchanan not to put any Douglas man among his ministers. Bright of Indiana had returned to the Senate and thus relieved the President of finding a place for him. Cass, as indicated above, was finally chosen as a compromise.

Breckenridge, who had been nominated Vice-President by the Cincinnati Convention as a compliment to the Douglas supporters, was not over popular with the President until 1860. Slidell and Douglas locked horns at the very outset of the term. In reply to a letter of a friend who feared that the cabinet would soon break

up, Buchanan made it evident that he did not intend to follow the dictates of the Senator from Illinois. Concerning the cabinet and Douglas he said,

"It was framed with great care and of the four from the South there are three, open, avowed and able states Rights Democrats. I trust in Heaven I may be President myself and think I shall be. I like Douglas very much. He shall have no cause to oppose my administration, but if he should, whilst I shall deeply regret it, I must bear it with a patient and resolute spirit."<sup>1</sup>

The Kansas affair served as a *casus belli* which Douglas was ready to wage for the control of the party.

The following extracts are indicative of the fact that Buchanan's Administration was a very personal one. Few more laborious men have ever occupied the White House.

"Colonel Phillips has been removed. Dr. Brodhead will go in a few days. It is said that every member of the Cabinet opposes Cutt's (Douglas's father-in-law) appointment; but the President is determined. Governor Floyd told Dr. Blake, in speaking of Cutts, that Mr. Buchanan was different from General Jackson; that General Jackson could be coaxed from his purposes, but that Mr. Buchanan could neither be coaxed nor driven." (W. C. Dunnington to R. M. T. Hunter, Oct. 6, 1857, A. H. A., Vol. II, p. 235.)

"It is said that the Cabinet are all afraid of Mr. Buchanan and that he overhauled the Secretary of War the other day relative to the selling of certain bonds owned by the United States. I do not believe the Cabinet will hold together until the adjournment of Congress." (*Ibid.*, p. 224.)

"... No man ever filled the Presidential office who knew better than he did how to enforce the respect due to his position and I know of no one more tenacious of his opinions when his judgment was fixed. He was absolute master in his own house." (Black on Buchanan, in the *Philadelphia Press*, Sept. 10, 1883.)

"Never has there been in the White House a more laborious occupant; he reposes no confidence even in his Cabinet officers, but insists on first reading every paper which they put before him for signature. He seldom leaves the house for exercise or air, but spends twelve or sixteen hours daily in discharging drudgeries which might be better left to the care of subordinates in the departments. . . . (Clipping from the *N. Y. Times*, Feb., 1859.)

"It is evident to the Cabinet that Mr. Buchanan intends to be

<sup>1</sup> Sears, "Buchanan and Slidell," A. H. A., July, 1922. Mr. Sears has incorporated the chapter in his more recent biography "John Slidell," Durham, N. C., 1926.

the President in every sense of the word. He is self-determined, not consultive, with the cabinet and, in the deliberation, acts as if the whole government rested its responsibilities alone on him. . . ." (*New York Herald*, March 16, 1857.)

"His Cabinet called him 'The Squire' behind his back and they stood in much the same awe of him as boys do of a school-master." (Mary Black Clayton, "Reminiscences of Jeremiah Sullivan Black," St. Louis, 1887, p. 106.)

The following letters show the conditions in Kansas at the time of the Leecompton agitation. The writer, as has been noticed, was a Northern man, a Pennsylvania Democrat of Somerset County. He had once been a friend of Walker, but when the latter heard he was coming he tried to get another appointed. He was too honest to be used as a tool by the Governor. He was also well known to Black and evidently an intimate friend. His reports are a valuable refutation of traditional histories on the subject.

FORT SCOTT, K. T.,  
December 24th, 1857

DEAR JUDGE:

I have just returned from Supreme Court. When at Leecompton, I was called from my bench duties by a note, from acting Governor Stanton, requesting me to go to him, immediately; I did so; I found him busy preparing a requisition on Gen Harney for troops, to be immediately sent to Fort Scott, to aid the Officers of the law in preserving the peace, and executing legal process, to arrest an armed body (of men)—(Ms. torn) who had assembled to attach that place, and were threatening to burn it; and, who had gone along the Osage river, with Sharps rifles and revolvers, driving men, women and children from their homes; taking, appropriating their property to their own use, and running them out of the Territory. He requested me to meet the troops on the way, and accompany them to Fort Scott, in order that I might take control of the matter, Officially—This, I, of course, did—I rode all night, and met the troops (2 companies of cavalry) at "Little Santa Fee," by forced march, night and day, merely stopping to feed etc, we made the distance (140 miles) in two days and one half—when we reached our destination we found that about 100 men, armed and equipped, under command of One Montgomery( who was a member of the Topeka convention) well fortified on the Osage river, 12 miles from Fort Scott, they having converted the house of a Mr. Southwood, whom they had robbed and drawn from his home. To this fort reinforcements of men, from the central and northern portions of the Territory,

have been constantly coming—And, we have learned, reliably, that since the adjournment of the legislature, James H. Lane is, now, at Sugar mound near Sugar Creek, in Linn County, some forty miles distant, on his way with 175 men! all armed to assist the men under Montgomery. The U. S. troops are here, to act in the enforcement of the law—Last night, scouts from the assailing party were seen passing around the Fort in hailing distance of the Sentinels—Thus, you see we are, literally, besieged by an armed banditti of the Lane party—All of whom are strangers to the inhabitants of this Southern section of the Territory, except a very few who are sympathisers with Lane—Now, as the Black Republican papers are filled with absolute falsehoods in relation to this “war” (as they term it), I will give you a true statement of the whole matter, on which, just at this crisis, they have seized and grossly misrepresented, as the excuse for this “war.” In September last One Curry, a very boisterous free States man, or rather disciple of Lane & Co, met a Mr. Letterman in the road, as he was riding on his way home. Mr. Curry, in a rude manner, required of Letterman to tell him whether he was a “free state, or a pro-slavery man.” This Letterman refused to do, when Curry shot him in the head with a revolver, the ball passing in, below the cheek bone, and out at the back part of his head. As Curry was arrested by due process of law, and the man did not die, Curry was let out on bail, by a justice of the peace. The affair, thus rested until the October term of the Court here: when Curry was indicted by the Grand Jury. He then fled from these parts, his recognizance having been, in due course of law, forfeited, suit was brought thereon. An attachment was laid upon his property, consisting of oxen, cows etc. as there will be no term of the court until May next, when this suit is triable; and as, the cattle would cost more for their keeping than their worth, they were sold, in compliance with the provisions of the statutes of our Territory. But before the sale, a body of men of this party, in the Night time, stole the cattle from the place where they were kept. The Marshall, however, went in pursuit of them and recovered them. This is the basis of the story which is blown abroad by the abolition papers, and their allies, turning the matter to account by charging that “those cattle, being the property of free State men, were in a lawless manner taken by 300 Missourians etc.” Not a word of truth is there in these Newspaper tales. They are made, by letter writing emissaries for the purpose of Agitation in the East.

The next item, used falsely, by these agitators to excite sympathy in the States, and raise forces in this Territory, is, in truth, as follows:



A company of some twenty-five men, from the neighbourhood of Lawrence, appeared on the Osage river, near the scene of the above related affair. They were all armed with Sharps rifles and revolvers; and by force drove the Rev. Mr. Southwood, an old man palsied by the wear of 75 years, and family, from his home and claim, took and used his property, and by threats, compelled him to leave the Territory. They remained boldly, and in defiance of law on the Osage at this house; in the mean time, taking what they needed from the settlers. Soon after their arrival a store, or depot, of ready made clothing and supplies, was established by an agent of some Eastern Aid Society, and they were furnished by this agent with supplies for the winter. When the court commenced its session, in October, complaint was made in due form, to the Grand Jury of the outrage perpetrated by these men, (upon) the Rev. Mr. Southwood. An indictment was found and presented against twelve of them (whose names were ascertained), process issued, and six of them were arrested and brought into Court. Part of them gave bail, and the others being under guard (there being no prison here) in a short time, made their escape. The leader of the banditti, now in arms against this place, One Bayne, is of the number, who gave bail, as above stated. This man has, from their Fort, demanded boldly, that the records and papers of their prosecution be delivered to him, or the town shall be burnt to ashes. This place being the seat of Justice for the 3d District, is therefore the object of their vengeance, The(y) repudiate all law.

In continuance of these outrages, about three weeks since, a party of these men, armed, went to the houses of Mr. Masson, Mr. Gously and Mr. Southwood Jr. (they being witness on part of the Territory against these bandits) and took them by force blindfolded them. Among the captives were two daughters of Mr. Southwood, one 13 years of age, the other 16. All the captives were taken to their fort on Osage, and retained three days and nights; during which time these young girls were forced to cook for these ruffians. Trial of Mr. Southwood was had, one of these banditti acting as Judge, and the judgment of the court was that Mr. Southwood, should sign a certificate of sale for value received to them, of his horse, 300 bushels of corn and other property, consisting of household affairs, winter's provisions etc. and also a deed of conveyance of his claim, or otherwise be hanged. The result was, that he signed these papers, and was released with threats against his life if he sought redress by law. Gousley and Wasson received similar treatment.

For these outrages, prosecutions were instituted. Writs were put into the hands of the Marshall for the arrest of some of

these men who were recognized and could be identified. The Marshall proceeded to the Osage to arrest them. He found them in a well fortified house; with regular barricades, port holes etc. As he approached the fort forty men in file issued from it under the command of Captain Montgomery and demanded why he was there? Having informed them that he was there as Marshall with writs for the purpose of making arrests of some of their number; he was told to leave, that he could make no arrests there. As he was alone, and they were all armed with Sharps rifles etc. he retired. Next day he returned to the fort and found them still there. As soon as the Marshall with the posse approached near to the fort, a volley was fired at them by these brigands, from it, and repeated some twenty times or more, the balls passing around them thickly. A few of the posse then returned their fire, several times. One of the Marshalls posse was shot in the arm, and his horse mortally wounded. The Marshall finding too strongly fortified again returned to Fort Scott. These outlaws boldly informed the Marshall that there was no law in Kansas, and that they were acting under orders from James H. Lane.

They defiantly remained there, to the terror of the settlers, until last Sunday night, when the Cavalry under command of Captain Sturgis arrived. They then fled from their fort to Sugar Mound, about 12 miles distant. On yesterday, one hundred armed men returned to the same fort, and are there, as I am authentically informed a awaiting the advent of the Gen'l James H. Lane, who is advancing with his army of five hundred armed men.

This last fact I have just learned by a letter handed to me from Mr. Hamilton, and from a messenger who has seen Lane and his encampment. Lane has a wagon load of arms with him to supply those he can enlist on the way. So here we are with a few peaceable citizens who have done nothing in violation of law, under the protection of 85 Cavalry, awaiting an attack from these outlaws. Now, I suppose you will say, that this is law and war in a mixed dose. I have held the troops in position to act as a posse comitatus *to aid in the execution of the laws in case of resistance with formidable force*. Our citizens are of course much excited. Now, dear Sir, the object of all this movement by Lane, who represents the Black Republicans in agitation here is to get up an embrio civil war in Kansas to prevent congress from accepting the Lecompton Constitution. But it is pitiable to behold poor settlers, at this inclement season of the year, despoiled of their goods, flying from their homes in terror and destitution.



And all this, upheld and urged on by persons professing to be Christians who are living in the east in ease and luxury.

I think Lane has done quite enough in rebellion to justify prompt and energetic proceedings against him. His instructions are sent from the east and he carries them into execution by using a homeless and vagrant rabble who are here, kept fed, and clothed by aid Societies which are busy in this business in the East, whose leading members appeal, falsely, to the sympathy and fanaticism of weak men and women.

I can assure you that I have, with a determination to be impartial, viewed matters here,; the result with me is, that not one instance have I found, in which any man of any other party has acted in a manner, regardless of law, but those of the Lane and company black Republican party. I am here to preserve the peace and enforce the law without regard of men or parties. Nearly twenty years of experience as judge, I think, has so trained me in the line of my duty, as to enable me to think, and act impartially. Besides I have no affection in favor of Slavery, I assure you. With all this, I must say that, since I have been here, no pro-slavery man has been guilty of violating the law, that I know of.

If those who are active in this strife to make Kansas a free State, will send emissaries from the East, to this Territory, to carry out their views, why in the name of Heaven (as they profess to act in that name) do they not send men of honorable and good character, and not the worst of vagrants. But I need not enlarge; the world will in due time wonder that ever such a state of things existed, in this, our day, and land.

These facts, which I have related, are strictly true, and out of them has been raised all this present, seemingly, deadly strife.

I shall stand at my post, and do my duty, leaving the consequences in the hands of him who holds, in his hand, the destiny of all men. I write this in the midst of alarm and confusion, incident to a virtual siege. I have not time to look over what I have written so as to correct it as to manner and form. The substance is correct. Therefore if you see fit you may let the President see it.

I send it to Leavenworth to be mailed, as I am informed there is no safe communication by mail here.

Your old friend truly  
J WILLIAMS

We certify that the statement set forth in the above communication of Judge Williams may be relied on as substantially true.  
Epapheo. Rankin

GEORGE A. CRAWFORD  
GEO. W. CLARKE  
DAN.<sup>AL</sup> F GREENWOOD  
SAM.<sup>AL</sup> A. WILLIAMS clk  
U S Dst Court

(Endorsed) 64

Dec. 24 1857  
Judge Williams  
Kansas Affairs.

KANSAS FORT SCOTT, March 3rd 1858.

To JAMES BUCHANAN, President of the United States

SIR: To describe and properly represent to you the distracted condition of this Southern section of our Territory would be impossible, and done, the representations could, perhaps, be too much for the credulity of any one whose standpoint is within the limits of civilization and law. Washington City on the day of the "Plug Ugly" riot could be a poor similitude of the scene day and night here. For four months past and particularly since General Lane has assumed military authority as he alleges by virtue of appointment of the legislature at the special session thereof, companies of armed men with Sharp rifles, just new from the factories and revolvers, and now with cannon, have established in forts in this region. They are commanded by the most desperate of men, possessing qualifications, peculiarly adapted to the work assigned them. Their men are not citizens of the territory, with the exception of a very few. The commanding officers of these companies report regularly to Lane, as *Commander-in-chief* of the *Militia of Kansas Territory*. They also make requisitions for men and munitions of war on at the same time *falsley representing* that "The Missourians" are in the Territory, driving here from all the *Free State* settlers, when I *know and aver* that there have not been any Missourians, or any persons whatsoever in all this region of Kansas, since I have been here. (June last), interfering in the least, with anyone except themselves. Thus do they fabricate their excuse, violating truth, for the perpetuating of the most flagrant outrages.

This has been the Black Republican programme of operation, since I have been here. Whilst I take special care to stand aloof from all agitation by either party, in the meantime I observe most carefully the current of their doings. Every fillibustering foray made on this region of the Territory has been preceded by publishing in the Black Republican papers of Lawrence, etc. an ac-

count of attacks, outrages, etc. committed by Missourians and pro-slavery men on Osage Valley, especially free state settlers, when I most positively declare these accounts are *entirely untrue*. None such have occurred since I have been here, as every citizen knows. As this place is point at which court is holden and from which process has been of course issued, it has become the special object of vengeance to attack by these men. For four months the citizens have been obliged to perform military duty, guarding the town day and night. During all this time I have had scarcely one nights sleep. For a week and more, while they were around about the town I was not in bed, or undressed. I kept on the alert so that I might preserve order among our own citizens, as they are of all political parties, as well as to prevent collision and bloodshed between them and the invaders. This so far, thank heaven, aided by a few peaceable and influential citizens, I have several times succeeded in doing.

Finding from the most authentic sources, about two weeks since, that *another bonifide* Lane causa belli had been promulgated in the "Prarie City Champion" a Black Republican newspaper, published in that town, laid out by a company in which James H. Lane is president, that in addition to the companies under Bayne and Montgomery, already stationed for months past, 12 miles distant at Fort Bayne, on the Osage river, a strong re-enforcement of Lanes men with seven cannon had started from Lawrence with the especial purpose of sacking and burning Fort Scott, and taking possession of the Osage country, I called on acting Governor General Denver for United States troops, to aid me in keeping the peace and in execution of the laws. The Governor, aware of the prospect of this, promptly responded by making a requisition on the commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth for two companies of cavalry. The troops arrived on Friday last only in the nick of time, as the following facts will show: On Sunday morning before break of day, a body of men under command of Montgomery attacked the house of Mr. James Ferris an aged man and peaceful citizen of Osage 14 miles from this town, seized him, tied him, robbed him of his household goods, his three horses, his and his families' clothing, indeed all he had, except his money. Of this, it was known that he had considerable, but while they were breaking into the house, his son in law escaped by a back way taking the money with him, it being dark when he escaped. His daughters, young women, after some abuse were led off by one of the company with a pretense of getting water to cook them breakfast from the spring which is distant some 100 yards from the house, he pitying, them, so soon as the spring was reached made them drop their buckets and escape for their lives

by running, which they did. After abusing the old man and robbing his house, they left pursuing with their wagons to others who were served in the same way. They have stolen some twelve or fifteen horses besides all the property on which they could lay their hands. They also broke into the house of Mr. Fermaugh in Osage and shot him through the shoulder with a Sharps rifle. When asked why they did such things their reply was that "having learned that the U. S. Troops were at Fort Scott, and they were prevented from robbing and burning them, they were determined to get something for coming so far, with so much trouble and they would therefore take vengeance on the goods and property of the pro-slavery" and drive them out of the country.

Of course the country became aroused, with alarm, at their doings. Soon persons whose property had been taken, appeared in this place, to seek the protection and redress of law. Informations were made on oath in accordance with laws; the deputy Marshal, with his writs finding that he would be restrained by force, one company of cavalry under command of Capt. Anderson accompanied him *as a posse* to the scene of their outrages. When the Marshall and the cavalry arrived it was found that they had fled, taking the booty in wagons with them. The officers and troops pursued them with all possible speed and energy. After scouring the prairies and groves for two days, they returned to their place last night with some of their principle men as prisoners. These marauders are in force to about the number of two hundred and fifty or three hundred. Besides small arms they have with them two or three cannons obtained at Lawrence and Ossawattamie. In the country among the farmers, they depredate by robbing, horsestealing etc. in small squads; and come on this place in full force. They start from the more northern part of the Territory on *foot* but by the time they reach their rendezvous, Fort Bayne on Osage, most of them are mounted. This has been the *political rebellion*, which has been kept up during the last fall and winter. These are *patriotic freemen* who refuse to vote, and will not submit to have the Lecompton Constitution forced upon them.

Just now, as I have been writing this, two settlers, have called on me, informing me that last night, finding that the Marshall and the troops were returned to Fort Scott, these outlaws appeared, in number about thirty in the neighborhood, pillaging, stealing horses, and warning others to leave the state in 24 hours, or they would lynch them and their families. Thus do they flee to their hiding places, when pursued by the troops, being warned by their scouts, and gather again as soon as the pursuit is over. The settlers are departing from this region of the Territory daily,

deeming it the only way of saving their lives and property. It is about the first thing in the morning to be done, on the Osage, for a settler to examine the outer side of his door, particularly if he be a former inhabitant of a slave-holding state; or, a sound democrat, of *the national union stamp whose metal is of the genuine ring*, to see whether, during the night pas he has received "notice to quit." If he find such notice on his door "fight or go" is his lot. One of these Osago visiting cards was brought to me, last night, by Captains Anderson as a speciman of Osago fashion."

I give you a copy of it "literatim et verbatim"—I give the quotation reversed as I consider the Osago fashions reverse the order of things elsewhere. Here it is:

"Leave this claim in 24 hours."

"JOHN BROWN CAPT."

The handwriting of this instrument is good betokening an education in any place but squatterdom. The writer uses few words, and knows something of punctuation. I have no idea that the name, subscribed is his true one. He, no doubt, meant to give a hint that the ejectment would be "done up Brown." They are apt in the use of fire. Of this the following will suffice as an instance which is true, as I am informed by Capt. Anderson.

Several of these outlaws came out of their hiding places after the Marshall and cavalry had passed through the neighborhood, and finding two boys, sons, one of Mr. Spratt, and the other of Mr. Ferris, they inquired of the boys "where the dragoons had gone"; the boys replied they did not know, whereupon these ruffans, took bundles of prairie grass and setting fire to it, they burned the children's faces until blistered to force them to tell what the poor things did not know. When I first heard of this I could not believe it; but the Marshall and Captain Anderson saw one of children and said that it was true. Thus you see the Black Republicans can boast of the fact that *the Sepoys are among us*.

Every day furnishes its catalogue of outrages. Extreme excitement prevails all over the country. I shall stand by my post, let the consequences be what they may, and do my duty. It requires, I assure you, sir, a man's best energies and efforts to enable him to effect anything officially effective amid such rebellion and anarchy. I assure you the aggression and violence is all on one side, the Black Republicans.

I feel constrained you of these things as a duty,

Your obt. servt, etc,

J. WILLIAMS.

His Excellency  
James Buchanan.

P. S. I merely add that just as I had signed my name to the letter which this accompanies, Mr. Ferris, the father of one of the boys, who were burned by these fiends, came into my room, in much excitement. He informs me that he was driven from his house by a company of men. Being compelled to fly to save his life, his family were left there yesterday evening. He knows not whether they are dead or alive. That Mr. Spratt one of the oldest settlers, and an excellent citizen were barracaded in his house, with a few friends, unable to get away, alive, determined to defend themselves to the death.

He also informs me that his son was held over the fire by these men, until so burnt, about the ankles as well as the face, that the flesh is burnt to the bone. Such are the doings of abolition sway by force of arms, in this part of Kansas. I fear retaliation that heretofore I have succeeded in preventing, will be forced from the friends of the sufferers. This is what the smooth tongued politicians in the East and Congress, too, have desired. They have certainly invited woe, and bid high for rebellion against law and order in Kansas, with a view to the overthrow of constitutional and union-loving democracy. If Kansas remains in the Territorial condition, and is not permitted under the constitution now before Congress, we may look for an end, that will be traced in blood from this, the mere beginning. The longer this question is delayed, the more will this unfortunate territory will be overrun by hireling bandits, who seize upon the occasion for employment in their vocation of murder. Every month brings with its lapse crowds of eastern city and country, "short boys," plug uglies, and the like, armed afreash with sharps rifles, ready for the work of rebellion and anarchy. These are the "emmigrated" or missionaries, who are sent by those, who at the altar of the Church and State, and who shout as fiercely the specious cry of "Freedom for Kansas" "oh Tempera Oh Mores!"

But I must conclude

Yours again, most sincerely,

"I send this, enroute Missouri as J. W. WILLIAMS  
anything in the form and style of  
government documents is intercepted."

There is a second letter of April 25th (H. S. P.) stating that the pro-slavery men were being forced to leave Kansas, 2000 men were in sight of the town; one or more troops had been killed; the Judge invited to leave the town on pain of death within six days, and his court proceedings broken up by armed men.

Small wonder Buchanan felt little sympathy with anti-slavery Kansas.



## LETTERS PERTAINING TO WALKER'S POLICIES IN KANSAS

The first letter was one signed by Cass. He was a poor penman and the body of his letter was written by another. Floyd had some trouble with his fingers with the result that his letters were usually written by another and only signed by him. Cass said Floyd would write and would send the copy of a letter addressed to Governor Walker. "Of course, no new measures would be taken in your absence, and these letters, therefore, are strictly confined to a renewal of the instructions which had been previously given by your direction. As the letter was followed by a telegraphic message, it was thought necessary that some immediate attention should be given to it. We do not like Gov. Walker's letter and I am satisfied that this will be your opinion. I can not believe that he thinks there is a real and pressing necessity for the amount of force which he requests unless he means to attempt to disperse the peaceable assemblages of the people at the point of the bayonet. If this was his intention, he will find his error as soon as he receives your last instructions. We all fear that Gov. Walker is endeavoring to make a record for the future, but while we hope otherwise, we are satisfied that in any event your record will be found fully satisfactory. The plan, which you have adopted, is the only true plan. It is to support the constitution and the laws, and to take all necessary measures for this purpose. We all desire sincerely that this matter should give you no uneasiness, but that you should remain at Bedford and renew your health and strength for your future labors. I enclose a very satisfactory letter from Judge McLean, by which you will see how necessary your last instructions were."

On the same day Floyd wrote to his chief inclosing a draft of a letter sent to Walker. Excerpts of the letter are as follows:

"At Fort Ridgely which can be sent to Fort Leavenworth in three weeks, three companies of Sumner's regiment will be in sixty days upon the borders of the territory, amounting to three hundred men, and for greater precaution, another company of flying artillery can be sent immediately from Fort McHenry.

"In my Judgement, a thousand men are fully sufficient to overawe those disposed to rebellion, but should a collision with the troop take place, then a general civil war between the opposing parties will be inevitable. In this event, a thousand regular troops under Harney will be much more than enough to turn the scale in favor of law and order.

"And I am afraid that this movement of the troops, in such imposing numbers, this most formidable preparation for war, is intended rather to cover his Excellency's retreat from his Topeka

speech, than to prevent the town of Lawrence from adopting a charter for its government. It is very obvious from the tone of his last dispatch that the denunciations of the South have surprised, annoyed and alarmed him, and that he intends at all hazard to regain his position or throw the blame of his failure upon someone else, either the administration, or the War Department. I doubt, now, whether the investment in Gov. Walker is going to turn out very profitable, notwithstanding we all thought, and I in particular, that his mission to Kansas was to prove a perfect political California for the administration. He shall have his forces, you may rely upon that, and then nothing is left for us but prayers for the happy deliverance out of all our troubles! I trust, with promising union of trusts and faith which so happily blend in your cabinet, your administration may, in this matter, experience the full benefit of the promise given to 'the fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man.'

"We meet in Cabinet, and 'discuss' very much, but I believe we all feel it to be a sort of game of Solitaire, the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out. But certainly, things are moving on in such a way as to give no grounds of solicitude or uneasiness whatever on your part; and we all feel that you are serving the State best, for the present, in laying in a stock of robust health for the winter campaign, which is to be an eventful one.

"With most respectful regards to Miss Lane,

"I am very sincerely, your friend

JOHN B. FLOYD

WAR DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON, July 31, 1857

"His Excellency,

"ROBERT J WALKER,

"Governor of Kansas,

"DEAR SIR:

"Your dispatch of the . . . of this month was received yesterday at the State Department and very maturely considered in Cabinet. Upon the subject of the troop which you think necessary to keep the peace in Kansas I deem it proper to make the following statement:

"You have with you now eight companies of the Regiment of 2d Dragoons and one company of the Sixth Infantry. Sherman's light battery has been ordered to Fort Leavenworth from Fort Snelling, and also the companies of the 10th Infantry. This will constitute a force of about thirteen companies, thoroughly equipped and efficient. In addition to this there will be six companies



under command of Lieut. Col. Johnston, five of which are cavalry, who will join you as soon as operation upon the boundary survey shall cease, which must happen in sixty or seventy days at farthest. And, moreover, the Cheyenne expedition having been ordered to be broken up, two companies will speedily join the forces at Leavenworth under Col. Sumner, constituting in all a force of twenty-one companies, fourteen of which will be cavalry and one company of light artillery. This, you perceive, is a very powerful force, and I hope will prove sufficient for all purposes, but if the exigencies of the case require a still larger force, you may rest assured all the force necessary for a due enforcement of the law shall be promptly furnished.

With the highest regard, I am

Very truly yours

*Secretary of War*

These letters show conclusively that Walker, and not the Administration, was the one that wanted troops increased in the region.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
WASHINGTON, Aug. 6th. 1857

DEAR SIR:

Upon receiving your letter yesterday with its enclosures, General Cass invited a meeting of the Cabinet for 10 o'clock this morning, when they were all present. At their request I joined them, and took with me the previous instructions to Governor Walker, dated respectively dated July 25 & July 31st. together with your letter to Gov. Floyd and the memoranda which accompanied it. These papers were carefully read through in order ascertain what is the precise position of the Administration upon the record. I then read a draft of a letter to the Governor, which I wrote hastily this morning, as a sort of a *nucleus* for discussion, in the event that it was decided to write any letter at all. A copy of this draft is enclosed. The Cabinet seemed to agree that no new instructions were absolutely necessary, but in deference to what seemed to be a slight preference on your part, they inclined to adopt substantially the letter which I had drawn, and to send it on. The last sentence, however, was to be omitted, and there was a suggestion of Gov. Cobb whether a more specific request to Governor to explain what use he intended to make of the required troops, might not be desirable. Pending the discussion on that point, Gov. Floyd read a letter rec'd from Gen'l Harney, & Mr. Henry sent in a letter from Mr. Pleasanton which was also read. Both these letters are to be sent to you today. They

indicate so clearly a state of things in Kansas which is quite inconsistent with Gov. W's military ideas, that the Cabinet decided to delay any further instructions until you were heard from again. To this conclusion they came, partly from a belief that the existing instructions are deficient, and partly from an idea, that, in the changed aspect of affairs, you might prefer to write the Governor an unofficial letter. The Cabinet all agreed that there is no probability of a collision in Kansas, and the great difficulty is how Governor Walker will relieve himself from a position which may be intensely awkward. They request me to write to you in their united behalf, that, in their opinion, there is no necessity for your immediate return, and to express their hope, therefore, that you will remain at Bedford as long as you desire to be there, or at least that you will not deprive yourself of the benefit of the Springs, now that you are there, with the idea that there exists any pressing emergency here which cannot wait your return.

The news from Kentucky today is highly favorable. Indeed notwithstanding the little excitement about Kansas, it does seem to me that the Administration enjoys to a remarkable degree the confidence of the whole community. If no accident occurs, its success can hardly fail to meet your highest expectations.

The Cabinet determined today to close the Executive Departments tomorrow, in consequence of the death of Mr. Dobbin, the late Secretary of the Navy.

In haste,

Very respectfully  
& truly yours,

JOHN APPLETON.

*Note on John Calhoun of the Lecompton Convention:* This man has been so assailed by the anti-slavery group, that it seems a mere act of decency to submit the following concerning his attitude. . . . The true attitude of John Calhoun (Covode, p. 163), the President of the Lecompton Convention, has been a subject of much doubt. Walker held him a prevaricator. The Republicans in 1860 vainly tried to prove that he had received secret orders from the Administration to prevent a referendum. They failed to do so. Calhoun was evidently trying to please all factions to secure himself. He was always the friend of Douglas (Covode, p. 111). In attempting to get Walker to accept the work of the Convention, Calhoun was trying to do something acceptable to Douglas. At the same time he seems to have been receiving advice from some pro-Slavery group in Washington. Yet he was shown beyond doubt, to have spoken and worked ardently up to the minute before the final vote was taken, for

submission of the entire document to the voters, as the plan favored by the Administration (Covode, p. 175). The issue hung on not more than three votes.

During the struggle the Union published the following note from the *St. Louis Ledger*:

"The abolition papers vindictively abuse Mr. Calhoun as ultra-pro-slavery in his principles. The value of all these tirades, the *St. Louis Democrat* and the *New York Tribune*, and their collaborators in the vocation of falsehood will be rightly appreciated when the fact becomes known that Mr. Calhoun was a citizen of Illinois before he was appointed to office in Kansas, that he went into the Territory a Free State man in his opinions; was elected as such to the convention, acted as such in it, was made president as such, was instructed with a full knowledge of his opinions with the powers which these presses so loudly complain, and will certainly vote to exclude slavery from Kansas. . . ." (The remainder of the article was a tribute to his character and an appeal to the North not to be deceived by false reports.)

The following letter from an editor, a son of Governor Wise, was shown to Thompson and received the notations indicated. For what Thompson said to Martin see Covode, p. 315-317.

RICHMOND, VA.

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>. 1857.

SIR:

My father has received information from a source which he is not at liberty to divulge, that a schedule proposed for adoption by the Lecompton Convention was prepared\* under the eye of Mr. Secretary Thompson, and was forwarded to the Convention in Kansas, through his confidential clerk, Mr. Henry L. Martin; —also that this fact ¶ has been made known to some, ultra men of the Southern delegation in Congress, who have boasted of it, as an instance of concession forced from the Administration.

The Govr. is somewhat disturbed by these statements, which have reached him under a plausible appearance, and earnestly requests that you will furnish him with some reliable information concerning the matter.

With very high respect

Yours truly,

\* This is utterly false  
His Excy.

James Buchanan

President of the United States

A. JENNINGS WISE

¶ This is equally false

J. THOMPSON

*Note on Jacob Thompson as Secretary of Interior:* "... In 1856, Mr. Thompson supported James Buchanan in the Presidential Convention. After the election, he was invited to take charge of the Department of Interior in Mr. Buchanan's Cabinet. This he accepted and entered on his duties March, 1857. He found the Department a mere aggregation of bureaus, working entirely without concert, and the Secretary a mere figurehead. With his old time energy, he went to work and infused new life into every department, united all the business under one head, himself the director. The department grew in favor and popularity with the whole country. The business transacted by it was enormous. The volumes of the decisions of Secretary Thompson, in law cases alone, were larger than those of the Attorney General. . . ." (J. F. Bivins, "The Life of Jacob Thompson," Historical Papers of the Historical Society of Trinity College, Durham, N. C., 1898, p. 88. For the rest of his career as Secretary of Interior, see chapter IV of this study.)

The writer of the letter below, William Crump, was a Virginia politician and a supporter of the Hunter faction there. The sentiments are a typical indication of the more moderate sentiment in the South at the time.

RICHMOND, February 3rd, 1858

MY DEAR SIR:

Amid the universal applause & congratulations of the wise and just which your last message will evoke, I do not know but that it may seem presumptuous in me to express to you my sense of the grateful admiration which filled my breast as I read its clear and comprehensive statements, to its powerful and persuasive argumentation and its effectionate & manly & patriotic appeals. You will pardon me, I trust, if, in the flow of sentiment it has inspired, I have been made to forget that you are only the President, & to feel that a clearer & kindlier tie unites us, as your words of fraternal counsel, and of earnest & spirit stirring entreaty fell upon my ears. I cannot doubt but that angry elements of faction & of strife, will subside before the presence of one who rebukes them in the language of the Republican fathers—in the language of reason, of truth and of patriotism.

But if unhappily the demon of discord will not be stilled, and a severed union & hostile sections & civil war shall dishonor our forefathers—desecrate the fabric (?) reared by their toil and cemented by their blood, and devastate our teeming fields & redden our hearth-stones; however your heart may sadden & may sicken at the spectacle, you cannot reproach yourself, posterity will not reproach you for not admonishing & imploring your

country-men to forget their dissensions, to bury their feuds, and to stand firmly and safely by the Constitution & the Union.

The obligation which we of the South, are under to you, whatever betides us, can never be forgotten. Your heroic vindication of our constitutional rights is without a parallel in our history, for no statesman whose personal interests & affiliations were north, has ever been subjected to the terrible ordeal through which you have triumphantly passed. While a tongue or a pen remains to us to preserve in tradition, or to embalm in history the memory of your disinterested & exalted conduct, be assured that your name will be a "household word" among us.

We do not hope—the intelligent among us have never hoped to perpetuate slavery in Kansas. It is plain to us & has long been that an overwhelming majority are against us. But it only makes the outrage more wanton & atrocious; that they will not exercise their power legitimately; but perversely & insultingly persist in crushing us, without & against law. This will not be borne I sincerely believe. Our people are pretty incensed & here, as at the North, the aggressive agents are most active & most potential. The conservative—those who calculate the cost & in the end will be most willing to make the sacrifice if it cannot be avoided—look with eager expectation upon your efforts & yet believe they will be successful in preserving the Union and harmony of these States. But I meant not to discuss the subject, but in writing to you to express my thanks to you for your generous defense of our rights. I fear that I have expressed them perhaps too warmly, but I have followed my instincts in what is written & will not rewrite. I expect & desire no answer, but I could not forbear the expression of the grateful sentiments with which I am sincerely, Your friend,

WM. W. CRUMP,

In the middle of the summer Floyd became very ill of a carbuncle and was threatened with spinal complications. As a result, he was allowed a leave of absence from Washington until the autumn. Buchanan added to his own duties those of Secretary of War during the same period. A number of letters passing between the various members of the Administration at this time give an interesting commentary on the passing and future events in the political arena.

(L. C.)

WASHINGTON 14 July 1859.

MY DEAR SIR/

I have on purpose delayed to answer your favor of the 6<sup>th</sup> Instant awaiting the return of Governor Floyd. On last evening I learned from his lady that he had abandoned the idea of visiting Bedford &, by the advice of his physicians at the Alum Springs, would go to the Hot Springs. For this I am extremely sorry as I do not believe there are any waters on the face of the earth from which he would derive so much benefit as those at Bedford. His health, I am sorry to say, is far from good.

Whilst it would afford me very great pleasure to accept your kind invitation; yet I need not say how inconvenient it is for ladies to stop half way on a journey. The weather being excessively hot we have determined not to leave here until the afternoon of Monday & go through to Cumberland the same night. With many thanks for your kind invitation & many regrets that I cannot accept it & with my best regards to M<sup>rs</sup>. Faulkner I remain,

Very respectfully,

Your friend,

JAMES BUCHANAN

Hon Charles J Faulkner

Mr. Faulkner was preferred by Wise over Floyd for Secretary of War, but Floyd was more popular, and Wise finally recommended his appointment.

(H. S. P.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

July 23, 1859.

MY DEAR SIR:

Though I do not doubt that you have seen the article in the *Pittsburgh Post* which proposes you as a candidate for re-election, I enclose it to you, nevertheless, with the suggestion that perhaps you may regard this as a good occasion for declaring your unalterable determination to retire.

The enclosed letter from Barr was sent me by Dawson. Barr seems to be afraid of misconstruction, and his conduct is certainly not altogether such as frees him from the imputation he is afraid of. But I am satisfied that he meant nothing but good to you as well as to the party. I think, too, that his editorial article is not calculated to do the slightest injury to either.

It is extremely probable that your enemies will charge you with acquiescing in the position which the *Post* places you in, unless you define one for yourself. But on all this subject I do not presume



to advise. Your better judgment will determine your course without reference to anything which I say.

About the time you return, I shall be under the necessity of going to Western Pennsylvania where I have much to do, and where I have some friends who continue to

“Yearn o’er the little good, and pardon my much ill.”

While there, I may be tempted to buy myself a residence suited to my narrow circumstances and simple tastes. But my attention has been somewhat strongly turned to Anandale. I saw Stamburgh a little while after you left, and though I asked him no questions about it, he said that I could easily make an arrangement (he did not mention how) by which I could get it. Your name was not mentioned. I take it for granted, therefore, that in purchasing it from you I would not be interfering with any rights or supposed rights of his. That being the case, I should be very much obliged if you will name the price and the terms on which you are willing to part with it. *Ceteris paribus* I would prefer it greatly to any other place in the world, on account of the neighborhood to Wheatland. Perhaps in retirement, I can perform the duties of a friendship sincere enough to make you some little atonement for my faults as a public officer. A simple line stating the price and in what payments is all I ask.

I ought to add that I would not have troubled you about this matter except that I am troubled myself with offers from other quarters which I am unwilling to reject absolutely until I have at least some idea how Anandale can be got.

I am very respectfully,

To/The President,  
Bedford Springs, Pa.

yours & c.  
J. S. BLACK

(L. C.)

WASHINGTON 5 August 1859

MY DEAR SIR/

I regret to learn from M<sup>r</sup> Drinkard that your health has not improved so much as we all expected & desired. I trust in Heaven, that we may speedily receive information of a more decided improvement. In the mean time I beg you not to feel the slightest uneasiness on account of your absence from the Department. However desirable your presence might be, still this is of no consequence when compared with the restoration of your health. Although we would get along much better with you; yet M<sup>r</sup> Drinkard & myself can do the business. Let your mind rest entirely easy on this subject.

We returned from the Bedford Springs on Tuesday evening last. I have had occasion whilst there, as at all former periods,

to observe the wonderful effects of these marvellous waters. Their virtue, however, is confined to diseases of the liver, the stomach & the kidneys, & to all bilious complaints. When your brother informed me that you were not suffering under any of these maladies, I was reconciled to go to Bedford without you, though I had set my heart on enjoying your company.

I do not know of any news which would be interesting to you that you do not see in the papers. I have done my best to assure the public that I would not be a candidate for renomination or re-election; though I learn that the Richmond Inquirer still insists that I am a candidate. The editor knows better, though the object is plain. It is to create a pretext for charging me with hypocrisy & falsehood. Well let it be so. I have not seen the paper myself.

Speculations still continue as to who will be the next Candidate for the Presidency. I had not a very good opportunity of ascertaining the public sentiment of Penn<sup>a</sup> on this subject whilst at Bedford nor has this been formed; but there is considerable talk both of Lane & Breckenridge.

With my kindest regards to M<sup>rs</sup>. Floyd, I remain always sincerely & respectfully your friend,

JAMES BUCHANAN

Hon: John B. Floyd

(H. S. P.)

HEALING SPRINGS, VA.,  
8th August 1859.

MY DEAR SIR:

I was in the act of writing to you when I received your very kind letter. I cannot express adequately the grateful obligation I feel under to you, for your thoughtful consideration of me since my unfortunate attack: and for what is still more gratifying to me, your kind sympathy for my wife before she left Washington. It has been the theme of her constant conversation since she joined me & has made an indelible impression upon the gratitude of us both.

I have not had the heart to write you before, for I desired when I did so, to be able to say with some degree of . . . (not clear) hope that my condition was improved. But this I cannot assert. I do not see that this slight improvement I have made in any thing beyond the effects of the mere quiet & rest which this secluded nook insures. The carbuncle I suffered from, is scarcely improved, although these waters have a marvelous reputation for efficiency in all such cases. I have some reason to fear that the true seat of the disease is spinal which discourages me.



I pray for vitality enough to make me fully able to perform the duties of my office, and to contribute my humble share towards that triumph of your administration, which as certainly awaits you as the expiration of your time; and which is with me the cheerful & strongest wish of my life.

I have talked a good deal to gentlemen from all quarters of the country since I came to the mountains and the sentiment of approval of you & your course amongst the Democracy is both universal & hearty. In this State the masses are as sound & as united as they ever were upon any national issue & the course of the Enquirer will effect nothing but its own ruin. I have not as yet met with a single advocate of Mr. Wise for the Presidency in this State, not one. This I think remarkable considering the popularity he did possess, and extraordinary efforts he has been all the time making. But if he had any advocates I think his last, his *very* last letter to New York would have shaken them loose from him. How this letter is generally supposed to be a forgery for even Wise's folly is scarcely thought to be capable of such a stupendous blunder. I am more than ever confirmed in the opinion that he is a deranged man.

Here as you found it in Pa., the chief prominence is given to Breckinridge & Lane in the public conversation for the presidency. If Lane's friends make no mistake, his prospects will be better than those of any other man I know. There is a feeling of great kindness expressed for him by everyone, and those to whom the idea of his candidacy is new are strongly impressed with his availability.

Mrs. Floyd has been confined to her room ever since she joined me owing partly to rheumatism & somewhat to an injury she received to one of her knees as she came out. She is recovering however now, and will be well I hope in a short time. She begs you will accept her most respectful regards and with kindest remembrances of us both to Miss Lane. Believe me my dear Sir to be most

Sincerely your friend,

JOHN B. FLOYD

To his Excy.

James Buchanan

President of the U. States

Letter of Buchanan to Floyd. L. C.

(Note by Judge Robt. W. Hughes of Va.)

Letter of Mr. Buchanan, showing the relations which subsisted between him and Gov. Floyd throughout his administration until near the end.

R. W. H.

SOLDIERS HOME, Sunday 14, August 1859

MY DEAR SIR/

Our good friend, Mr. Buck, is about to proceed to the Healing Springs tomorrow morning & I embrace the opportunity of writing to you. I have received your kind favor of the 8<sup>th</sup> Instant & desire again to assure you that we are getting along quite well in your absence. Any little inconvenience experienced is nothing, less than nothing, compared with the restoration of your health. Compared with this, an additional absence of three months would not be regarded. You ought to relieve your mind altogether from business, cultivate agreeable society, study to obtain Christian tranquillity of spirit, & avoid all depression of mind. We all in this neighbourhood feel deep solicitude about M<sup>rs</sup>. Floyd & yourself

[sic]

& indulge the agreeable anticipation of having you both with us again in the Autumn.

M<sup>r</sup>. & M<sup>rs</sup>. Thompson left for the White Sulphur yesterday. He is not to be absent more than a fortnight. M<sup>r</sup>. Cobb is now daily expected; but I suppose the next Cabinet meeting will consist of General Cass, Mr. Jones, Mr Holt & myself yet we shall get along very well. General Cass is most remarkable, not only for benevolence & ability at his great age, but for physical qualities. He does not seem to regard one of his dangerous attacks a button. He is as sprightly & lively the next morning as though he had enjoyed peaceful & uninterrupted slumbers the night before. I pray Heaven he may last throughout my term at least: & many years after. He & I are now about the last of the "old Fogies," & we must soon surrender the Government to you young fellows. I hope you may not make smashing work.

Wise doesn't believe that I will not be a candidate; but says he has knocked my aspirations into a cocked hat. Your military candidate, General Lane, has sustained a sad blow in losing his State. I am sorry for it; but it may not prostrate him. I mourn over Wise, because I cannot forget his active & efficient friendship in the hour of need. If he should "bag Boston" he will have a chaos of troublesome game in his wallet.

(The remainder of the President's letter pertained to some minor appointments.)

(L. C.)

WASHINGTON  
Aug. 12. 1859

MY DEAR SIR,

We all feel much anxiety, respecting your condition. I was rejoiced to learn from Col. Drinkard yesterday, that you were somewhat better, and that appearances were more encouraging.

I trust, my good friend, that you will keep up your spirits, for that is an essential element of recovery, and especially when a man is blessed with the genial disposition, which Providence has given to you, and which makes for you such hosts of attached friends. We never meet in Cabinet, without the interchange of regret at your absence and of hope, that we shall soon see you at your post, not less for the sake of the Country, than for our own sake. The President participates in this feeling, as strongly as any of us.

As to political affairs, I feel little disposition to write you about them. I am impressed with the conviction, that our party is becoming more consolidated, and the importance realized of united action. Certainly the signs of the times are better. I will not believe, that there is any such judgment against this Country in store, as the defeat of the Democratic party, and above all at this crisis.

Trusting we shall see you here in good, — — — and with my best respects to Mrs Floyd

[sic]

I am my dear Sir,  
Ever your friend  
LEW CASS

Hon. J. B. Floyd

(H. S. P.)

SWEET SPRINGS VA.  
Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>. 1859.

To

His Excellency

JAMES BUCHANAN

MY DEAR SIR:

I have been in the mountains a week today—during the time I had one real shaking ague. This annoyed me no little, and the confinement & medicine necessary to break the chill, were more annoying still. On yesterday I felt entirely restored and left the White Sulphur for these Springs. We reached here last evening. The whole establishment is crowded & our accommodations are inferior to what they were at the White Sulphur. I spent all the evening with Gov. Floyd and Mrs Floyd. They are most comfortably situated and both look better than I was prepared to find. Mrs Floyd is thinner and feebler than when you saw her last but still she walks without limping. Gov. Floyd's skin is clear, his flesh is somewhat reduced, and he only complains of debility. I am now encouraged since I saw him.

I wish very much you had visited these Springs instead of going to Bedford, or rather I wish you could still visit them. The Mountains are full of people of character & influence. They

want to see you and a visit would be very highly appreciated by the people. Gov. Floyd thinks it would be a great point if you come, politically.

In all the speculation there is literally nothing new.

Your friend,

J. THOMPSON

I shall certainly return next Saturday or Sunday.

(H. S. P.)

RED SWEET SPRINGS

5th Sept. 1859.

To His Excy.

JAMES BUCHANAN

President of the U. S.

MY DEAR SIR:

It is just two months today since I left Washington in hopes of finding health in the mountains, which it seemed I would not recover at home. I am sorry to say the improvement has not fully answered my expectations. Although not well I am in a measure relieved and, probably if I had allowed the ingredient of advancing years to take its place in the calculations, my improvement is all I should have expected. At any rate I am not the least discouraged but on the contrary, feel that I will command the strength for my duties; & that too with a full appreciation of what they will require. Indeed the necessity I feel there will be next winter for health & strength nerves me far beyond all the mineral waters of the mountains. When we get fairly into the conflict, I am sure I shall be fully restored.

I am of the opinion from all I gather this summer from every source, that, the effort, next winter will be to crush the Democratic party by breaking down your Administration at any cost & by every means which unscrupulous malignity can devise. I think that no previous Congress carried on such a warfare ever, as will characterize the next. But I feel in my inmost man, that I shall bring up & maintain my column in your support, & I would sooner die than to relinquish the trial.

If we are beaten in the organization of the House, defeat will promote cordiality & bitter discipline amongst our party in Congress: which will be our immense gain upon the hermaphrodite organization of the last House under fat Orr, with its spirit of political insubordination. If we are beaten in the House you can control the party easily. You are really very strong with the people; you have only to dictate your policy & to excommunicate all who fail or refuse to sustain it, to organize the party & secure harmonious action sufficient to carry whatever their united strength can accomplish. You have power in the South because you are

identified fully with the conservatism of the South: & this was never stronger than it is today. The efforts to form extreme parties here this summer have signally failed. Nothing could be more pitible than the abortive efforts of Gov. Adams, on the Slave trade question. The movement did not rise to the dignity of contempt, so too with regard to a project attempted to be gotten up for the "*peaceful colonization*" of Sonora, a sort of varialoid form of filibustering.

Amongst others I met here your friend, Mr. Branch of North Carolina. He is far above the generality of Congress in point of talent, & superadded to this, he has the mind of being a true friend of yours & your Administration.

You would be greatly impressed, I am sure, to witness the profound & almost criminal indifference of all men & all papers upon the subject of the next presidential nomination. The only points universally agreed upon are that Douglas & Wise are "... over Tailors." The fiat of the people has gone forth against them. Douglas' last exposition of Squatter Sovereignty will finally extinguish him. Besides being the most objectionable in principle, it is the most sophistical thing that has come from the Little Giant's inscrupulous pen.

I shall not avail myself of your kind & considerate "leave of absence" to so late as first of the fall; although the offer of it in the terms you were good enough to use touched me most sensibly. I will return shortly to my post.

I fear I have scarcely been able to preserve as you suggested "a Christian Cheerfulness," although my mind has been exercised with scriptural associations. I ... much on "the chosen people of the Lord." The next room is occupied by a remnant of "the children of Isreal," and since their illustrious progenitors threw down the walls of Jerico with the thunder of their ram's horns, I am sure no such Isrealitish drone as my friends keep up constantly has ever saluted gentile ears. The next best thing to the New Testament, no doubt, is the Old to engage one's thoughts.

Mrs. Floyd joins me in the kindest regards to Miss Lane & yourself with which I beg to assure you I am always truly your friend,

JOHN B. FLOYD

(L. C.)

MY DEAR SIR/

In preparing your instructions to the commanding Officer at Harper's Ferry it will be necessary to point out to him in what case he may interfere in the requisition of the Marshal. You

had better see Judge Black so that your instructions to the Commanding Officer & his to the marshal may correspond

Y<sup>r</sup>. friend

JAMES BUCHANAN

Governor Floyd

1859 (Oct.)

It refers to the instructions to be given to Col. Robert E. Lee, who was sent to reduce John Brown at Harper's Ferry

R. W. H.

(Note by Judge  
Robt. W. Hughes  
of Norfolk, Va.)

It is not the purpose of this note to review the whole Scott-Buchanan controversy over General Scott's "views." The matter has been thoroughly treated by Buchanan, Black and Curtis. (One of the places most easily available is Curtis, Vol. II, chap. XIV and pp. 365-368; 416; 417.) The following is a good summary of Buchanan views on the subject, adding a bit of new information. It was written to Edwin M. Stanton before he had joined the Republicans. (L. C.)

WHEATLAND, April 8, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Many thanks for your kind favor of April 3rd and that which preceded it.

From the notes of preparation it may be fairly inferred that the Administration intends to make a hostile demonstration somewhere in the Confederate States. If so, Virginia will, I fear, speedily secede.

Your recollect, perhaps not, for it has attracted but little attention North, the very unfortunate recommendation of Gen. Scott to garrison nine forts including Fortress Monroe in six of the States which afterwards seceded. This document was dated on the 29 October 1860,—before the Presidential election & before any disloyal movement on the part of any State. It excited much indignation throughout the South, caused the violent and unsparing abuse of its author throughout the Southern States & afforded the pretext, if not the reason, for their rash & unjustifiable conduct in seizing the forts. When in conversation with Mr. Slidell, I denounced Louisiana for having seized the Forts on the Mississippi, he declared they would never have thought of such a proceeding but for the threatening communication of General Scott. I wish you would get his "View" which he sent to the Secretary of War and myself under his own hand. I know they were communicated immediately to the South but not by whom,



& I think their substance was at once heralded in the New York Press. I should be very much indebted to you if you would ascertain when they were first announced in the public "Press." It is not very long since they were published in the National Intelligencer with some prefatory remarks no doubt dictated by the General himself. No man but General Scott could ever have written such a paper; but it was sufficient to set the South on fire. It was under such circumstances, when the Forts in Charleston harbor were in no danger, as the event has proved, before South Carolina had seceded & whilst she was performing all her relative duties to the Union that I was urged to send reinforcements there and commence the conflict. This too at a time as General Scott must have known when I had not more than 500 troops disposable for any purpose. I deemed it wise policy to adopt all means in my power to prevent the other Slave States, who did not favor disunion, from making common cause with South Carolina which was a disunion state per se. Never was a prediction better calculated to its own fulfilment than the "Views" of General Scott.

I have enjoyed excellent health since my return to this place & have not been sick a single minute notwithstanding what the papers say. I feel ten years younger though time rolls on apace & I shall be 70 years of age on the 23<sup>d</sup> of this month should Providence spare my life.

I should be very happy to see you here; but should be sorry if you would neglect important business to come without necessity. I do not perceive that such exists to the present moment. You would be still the more welcome should you bring Mrs. Stanton along.—I should be more content in my present situation were it not for my anxiety about the state of the country.

From your friend,

Hon. Edwin M. Stanton.

JAMES BUCHANAN

P. S. You will observe that General Scott cites Paley's Philosophy in favor of coercion, "Last Chapter" & there is not a word in that or any other Chapter of the book to give the slightest countenance to the principle he asserts. Paley instead of the Constitution!

(It might be added that at the time Scott presented his "Views" there were not enough troops to garrison the forts in the South. Floyd had had some difficulty getting enough troops to quell some Indian troubles in Oregon, and General Houston waited in vain for more troops to aid in driving marauders who were making raiding parties on Texas from Mexico. Scott had also conceded the legality of secession which the President did not admit. At the time of the above letter Scott had evidently become a coercionist.)







From a photograph in possession of W. H. Lowdermilk & Company, Washington, D. C.

#### PRESIDENT BUCHANAN AND HIS CABINET.

Beginning at the left the men are: Jacob Thompson, Lewis Cass, John B. Floyd, President Buchanan, Howell Cobb, Isaac Toucey, Joseph Holt, and Jeremiah S. Black. The photograph was evidently taken after the death of Aaron V. Brown in March, 1860, and before the changes of December, 1860.

## CHAPTER III

### BUCHANAN'S MINISTERS

Buchanan's Ministers as a Factor in his Policy—Sources of Information—Relations of Each of the Members of the Cabinet with the President on the Eve of Secession: Cobb, Thomas, Dix, Cass, Stanton, Holt, King, Toucey, Floyd, Black, Thompson—Buchanan's Valuation of his Cabinet—His Contact with the Leaders of the Democracy.

After the results of the Election of 1860, Buchanan had no doubt as to opposition which was to follow. The sun of success had cast dying rays on the ante-bellum Democracy. He ably stated his unenviable situation in his book published some years later,

The President had less than four months to complete his term of office. The Democratic party, to which he owed his election, had been defeated, and the triumphant party had pursued his administration from the beginning with a virulence uncommon even in our history. Every act of his had been misrepresented and condemned, and he knew that whatever course he might pursue, he was destined to encounter their bitter hostility. No public man was ever placed in a more trying position.<sup>1</sup>

The situation was hardly less trying to the several members of the cabinet. The plight of the members from the Southern states was indeed exceedingly unenviable. How were their political ideas and ideals going to react to the events that were to follow? The President's task was the securing and retaining of a group of ministers who would subscribe to his principles and remain with him to the end of his term. The very existence of his government was bound up with this delicate undertaking.

Each of the members presented a different phase of the problem, and will be separately considered. There arises the question as to what Buchanan really thought of his Cabinet and how far they really entered in his schemes and plans for the solution of his difficulties.

The sources for this portion of the study must be carefully

<sup>1</sup> Buchanan, p. 109.

weighed by any one who attempts to synthesize them. Black, whose accounts are most voluminous, became rabidly anti-Southern in his later years. He was also, unconsciously, very egotistic. Stanton in private conversations did not hesitate to vilify his former friends, and tried to enlarge the halo around his own head. Holt, Dix, and King became Republicans during the war and tried to increase their "coercive" record in matters applying to the South, once they had repudiated their political faith of former days. Holt tried to straddle, in his attempts to praise both Stanton and Buchanan. Buchanan was annoyed at Holt's extravagant remarks on Stanton. Floyd spent most of his time defending his own position,—a fact which can well be tolerated owing to the malignity of his enemies. The statements of Thompson and Thomas are probably the most reliable. Few statements by Toucey are available. He and Buchanan were the only ones who changed the least all the way through the war period. All of the Cabinet (except Stanton) paid notable tributes to Buchanan's character and ability, but they never lost a chance to say a good word for themselves when they differed with him. Consequently we have many variations of impressions of events in that exciting period.

One of the main conditions that must be mentioned is that all of the Northern members of the Cabinet were very hostile towards certain United States Senators whom Buchanan naturally held in high favor. Their dislike against these men is so apparent that their scathing remarks must not be too seriously considered.

Cobb, who had considerable political influence in his own State long before he came into the Cabinet, was the first member to resign. One of Buchanan's main reasons for appointing him was that he had been a strong Unionist in 1850. By 1861 Howell Cobb had come to look upon a Republican Presidential victory as a menace to republican institutions.

Black said of his character:

No one who knew him, either as a co-worker or an opponent, could help respecting him. He was honorable, upright, and sincere, true to his convictions, perfectly faithful to his duties as he understood them, and a man of great intellectual ability.<sup>1a</sup>

<sup>1a</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881.

Cobb held that the election of Lincoln justified secession and had consequently vigorously dissented from Buchanan's message of December 3d but decided to remain in the cabinet. By December 5th he had made up his mind to follow his state and wrote a public letter to the people of Georgia. (Black had previously suggested they both present their views to Buchanan, let him decide, and that the rejected one should quit the Cabinet; but this hurt Cobb's feelings, and Black apologized.) The letter set his course, and his resignation followed.<sup>2</sup>

The parting was a heart-wrench for both President and Minister, but it was inevitable. Buchanan passed no judgment upon the political *opinions* of his ministers regarding Secession, but Cobb had now gone over into the realm of action.<sup>3</sup> Both held each other in high esteem, and after Buchanan's retirement Cobb wrote him an affectionate note in which he said:

My heart often prompted me to write you; but whilst you remained in Washington, I declined to do so because I knew that my opinions differed so widely from yours that any suggestions from me would be obtrusive and unacceptable. Though silent I sympathized with you in every embarrassment which you encountered and rejoiced with all my heart when the fourth of March came and relieved you from troubles which your counsels would have avoided but which were forced upon you by the folly and madness of your enemies and the enemies of your country.<sup>4</sup>

The brief period of service of Philip F. Thomas in Buchanan's Cabinet and the exact reasons for his resignation are well told by himself. An abridged account is here inserted. His views are extremely valuable as he did not become a Republican nor did he belong to the extreme Southern group.

You will perhaps remember that I had for eighteen months been Commissioner of Patents, a place which I preferred and would again prefer to any under the government were I in active political life.

My appointment as Secretary of the Treasury was entirely unexpected. . . .

<sup>2</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 505-519.

<sup>4</sup> A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 554.

He then tells how he was informed first by a Colonel Berrett and later by Thompson:

I explained to him that I was averse to accepting it. I said I did not, in the then chaotic condition of affairs, like to assume such a responsibility especially in view of the fact that the Treasury was empty and the interest on the public debt due within a very few days. Mr. Thompson insisted, and I finally accepted the place.<sup>5</sup>

The Treasury then was indeed in a sorry shape. There wasn't a dollar available and a loan had to be negotiated before the interest on the debt could be paid.<sup>5a</sup> Soon after my assumption of the office, Congress passed an act authorizing a \$10,000,000. loan, and I at once advertised for \$5,000,000 at 12 per cent interest. This large rate of interest was demanded on account of the unsettled condition of the country both financially and politically. I was very much opposed to issuing any more of the loan authorized than was necessary to pay the interest on the public debt. My opinion was that the act of Congress had given ample authority for issuing Treasury notes to meet the necessities of the Government after the interest on the debt was paid. My first desire was to pay the interest and then issue Treasury notes for the balance of the \$10,000,000. instead of paying 12 per cent interest on the whole loan. Mr. Buchanan, however, disagreed with me and thought that the full amount of \$10,000,000 should be negotiated. I therefore advertised for the additional \$5,000,000.

This loan was the direct cause of my leaving the Cabinet before the expiration of Mr. Buchanan's term. It was reported to me that some New York capitalists had gone to Mr. Buchanan and said that they would not subscribe for the loan as long as a Southern man remained at the head of the Treasury. I visited Mr. Buchanan and asked him if it were true that he listened to such a reflection upon the honor of one of his Cabinet officers. He replied that such a statement had been made to him. I answered, "Very well, then, my connection with the Department must cease." He spoke about my taking the Interior Department from which Mr. Thompson had resigned. I replied in the negative and wrote my letter of resignation. I had, of course, disagreed with him somewhat as to his Southern policy, and assigned that as the reason why I left the Cabinet. What was disagreeable to me was that any man should question my fidelity to the trust I held, no matter how much I disagreed as to Mr. Buchanan's political policy.

<sup>5</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 14, 1881.

<sup>5a</sup> This was not due to any maladministration by Cobb. See E. P. Oberholtzer, "Jay Cook, Financier of the Civil War," Philadelphia, 1907, vol. I, pp. 124-7.



My service in the Cabinet was anything but an agreeable part of my public life. We were almost constantly in session during the month. I was at the head of the Treasury ready to meet any emergency that might arise, and there were grave responsibilities coming upon us every day. While I held that this Government was a compact between the States and that each was sovereign and, therefore, had the right of secession, I also held that the central Government had the right of coercion if she chose to exercise it.

#### A BELIEVER IN NULLIFICATION

I was and still am a believer in the doctrine of nullification as expounded by Mr. Calhoun. I also believed that an officer of the Government had no right to hold his position and do any act calculated to bring discredit upon its authority, and Judge Black's criticism of Jeff Davis' preparation to surrender the forts in Charleston Harbor to South Carolina meets my entire approbation. My position upon the duty of an officer can be found in the record of the Department where an officer of a revenue cutter ran his vessel into Charleston Harbor and turned her over to the South Carolina authorities and then sent me his resignation. I ordered that it be not accepted, and that dishonor be written over his record in the Department and that he be dishonorably dismissed from the service.

Thomas' successor was John A. Dix of New York. His relations with Buchanan have already received some notice in this study. A vigorous, active man, he possessed a love of sensationalism. He had been made Postmaster at New York after the default of Isaac Fowler. He had opposed the action of Dean Richmond at the Charleston Convention (Richmond was a pro-Douglas man), and had flayed the Republicans with invectives equal to those of Black.

As has been stated, the New York bankers were wary about taking up the loan, for fear the money would go South. It has been sometimes stated that Buchanan appointed Dix <sup>6</sup> to please this group. This was not the case. Buchanan was angry at the action of the New York bankers and wrote to Royal Phelps <sup>7</sup> (December 22, 1860):

I hope the Treasury Note Loan may be taken at a reasonable rate of interest. No security can be better, in any event, whether the Cotton States secede or not. . . .

<sup>6</sup> Morgan Dix, "Memoirs of John A. Dix," Vol. I, Chap. VIII.

<sup>7</sup> King, "Turning on the Light," pp. 187-188. *Ibid.*, p. 47.



I cannot imagine that any adequate cause exists for the extent and violence of the existing panic in New York. Suppose, most unfortunately, that the Cotton States should withdraw from the Union, New York would still be the great city of the continent. We shall still have within the borders of the remaining States all the elements of wealth and prosperity. New York would doubtless be somewhat retarded in her rapid march; but, possessing the necessary capital, energy and enterprise, she will always command a very large portion of the carrying trade of the very States which may secede. Trade cannot easily be drawn from its accustomed channels. I would sacrifice my own life at any moment to save the Union, if such were the will of God; but this great and enterprising nation is not to be destroyed by losing the Cotton States even if this loss were irreparable, which I do not believe unless from some unhappy accident.<sup>8</sup>

Buchanan had sent for Dix to take charge of the War Department.

Stanton, however, sent King to the station to ask Dix to accept only the Treasury. Dix carried out the instructions.<sup>9</sup> Buchanan replied that "he thought he could make the arrangements."<sup>10</sup> He may have intended to transfer Thomas to the Interior Department, but Thomas resigned instead.

As Dix stayed at the White House with Buchanan, their relations were very intimate. Nothing clearer could be desired for proof that Buchanan was running his own government, than the fact that Dix and he were not agreed upon the policy of re-inforcing the forts.<sup>11</sup> Dix had no adequate conception of the Southern temperament, so he considered Buchanan slow and timid.<sup>12</sup> But he found Buchanan set on the very wise idea that the North should not start the war,—an idea to which, he states, the President

<sup>8</sup> Some said this letter showed Buchanan was willing to part with the Cotton States, but there is no statement of what Buchanan intended to do so anywhere in the letter, nor did he in any other place say he favored any such idea.

<sup>9</sup> King, "Turning on the Light," p. 189.

<sup>10</sup> Dix, "Memoirs of John A. Dix," Vol. I, p. 371.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 372.

<sup>12</sup> See 11: His statement on Buchanan's credulity is amusing. It may be true to the extent that Buchanan was wont to go to the bottom of all rumors no matter of what nature. He was in this sense credulous to some degree.

clung with uncompromising tenacity. Dix came to respect Buchanan for his ability, and above all for his conscientiousness.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Buchanan found Dix a very agreeable and pleasing companion, and their friendship continued until Buchanan's death.

The "shoot him on the spot" telegram which Dix sent to New Orleans had a great run of popularity in the Northern press and gave Dix considerable fame. In reality it was a farce. The poor meek old gentleman to whom it was sent barely escaped from New Orleans with his life when the message became known. Dix correctly believed that Buchanan would not have allowed him to send the message, so it was sent without Buchanan's knowledge. Buchanan, however, never reproved Dix for having sent it. It is to be admitted, however, that the telegram had a very salutary effect in keeping Northern confidence back of the Administration.

Later Dix became an intimate with Bennett, who had become one of Buchanan's able vilifiers, yet he had opposed Bennett's appointment to a post at Turin. The failure to appoint was, in Buchanan's opinion, the chief source of the trouble. During the war he became an ardent supporter of the Republicans. In December, 1860, he had favored, like many other conservatives, peaceful separation, provided the South aided in attempting compromise. He regarded Sumter as a cardinal error, and withdrew all his sympathy after that event.<sup>14</sup> Later he exploited his "deeds" to the limit in his latter career.

One of the most talked of resignations from the cabinet in 1861 was that of General Cass. Buchanan's dislike of him has been already mentioned. This psychological fact played an important rôle at the time of his departure from the Cabinet. Black considered Buchanan's pique as unfair, although he said Cass took it good-naturedly.<sup>15</sup> Consequently the differences of President and Premier were few, as the latter was little more than a cypher as far as Buchanan was concerned.

In the winter of 1859-1860, Cass was already extremely worried

<sup>13</sup> Rhodes omits most of Dix's remarks that are laudatory of Buchanan.

<sup>14</sup> "He went into the war because by the action of the South the chance of peaceful separation had been destroyed." Morgan Dix, "Memoirs of John A. Dix," Vol. I, p. 340.

<sup>15</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 57, 58.

over the fate of his country, and came late at night to the house of Roger Pryor, who had made a speech looking towards disunion, and urged him to save the country that had made him (Cass) what he was.<sup>16</sup>

When Buchanan's message of December 3, 1860, was before the Cabinet, it was altered to suit Cass, who wished to strengthen the denial of the right to coerce a State. Later, however, the Secretary became anxious to reinforce Sumter, and gave that as the reason for his resignation.<sup>17</sup>

McLaughlin had tried to deny that Cass desired to return to the Cabinet by giving statements of Cass' relatives that Cass never said anything to them on that subject. McLaughlin is right and wrong. The cause of Cass' silence to his family was probably due to the fact that his son-in-law had persuaded him to resign. Black thought Cass' son-in-law and others were at the bottom of the matter. Naturally he kept his mind to himself, as he had no desire for further criticism from members of his own household.<sup>18</sup>

When Black told Buchanan that Cass would resign, Buchanan said it was a good riddance, and later recorded that Cass was no man for a crisis such as they then had on their hands. Black, however, desired Cass to return.<sup>19</sup>

Buchanan was angry because the resignation of Cass had put him in a false light with Northern opinion. Some of the papers praised Cass for his action and called Buchanan a traitor.<sup>20</sup> Buchanan saw that if Cass returned it would appear as a victory for Cass at his expense. He, therefore, was opposed to the idea of having him return to his official family. The affair taught him that if anyone else left his Cabinet, because of alleged lack of diligence on his own part, it would spell ruin to the Government. Buchanan's Government must in the last resort rest upon conservative Northern opinion, and he realized that fact. Personally, he was pleased that Cass was out of the way. Cass, when

<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Pryor's "Reminiscences of Peace and War," pp. 100, 101.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Cunningham MacLaughlin, "Life of Lewis Cass," New York, 1891, pp. 340-41.

<sup>19</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 64. An excellent letter on the subject.

<sup>20</sup> *E.g.*, *The Worcester Spy* ran a headline: "Buchanan Abets Treason."

he saw the abuse which he had caused to be heaped upon his old chief, regretted his resignation. Black believed his main reason for retiring was that he feared the immediate destruction of the Administration, and desired to save his own good name. He said the sentiment in his own section would not sustain him if he remained. Black, however, persuaded him to return, and approached Buchanan upon the subject, but Buchanan replied that, as the world had heard all about the trouble in the four days that had ensued, it was too late for him to reconsider Cass' resignation.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note that a friend of Buchanan's, Henry Wycliff, said the same thing as early as 1857. "Although Gen. Cass when in Gen'l Jackson's cabinet was not accustomed to decide questions that arose . . . but left them to the decision of the President who thought unfavorably of him in this regard. . . ."<sup>21a</sup>

Mr Buchanan desired in his own defense to tell the truth concerning Cass' desire to retract his resignation. Black, from loyalty to Cass, would not give Buchanan the details unless Buchanan would remain silent about them. Buchanan refused to do this. The President never overcame the idea that Cass had treated him shabbily. When he was requested to contribute something to the Michigan statesman's biography, Buchanan replied, not without due courtesy, that he was never associated with the General in his prime, and did not feel qualified to write a sketch of him.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan," Vol. II, p. 400.

Rhodes has a different version of this affair. Black's letter to Curtis (See 19) was evidently unknown to him. It is one of those many instances where he refused to give Buchanan the benefit of the doubt.

<sup>21a</sup> Henry Wycliff to Buchanan, Dec. 6, 1858, H. S. P. Thompson and Holt also chided Cass with his desertion. See footnote 22.

<sup>22</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 460.

Thompson's Account (year uncertain), as reported by Burr of the *Philadelphia Press*, March 14, 1884:

"Cass was one of the best old fellows that ever lived, but he loved his ease and hated to differ with any one. I recall an interesting incident when he resigned. The next morning he sent a request that I should call and see him. I went and found the old fellow a good deal disturbed in mind. He said to me: 'Thompson I want you to see the President for me. I want to recall my resignation. I believe I ought to stay with the Administration

Stanton, who was to fill the vacancy made by Black's transfer, was a peculiar personality.

He could reach the heights of great love of country, yet blend this virtue with baseness to his friends and contemptible cruelty to his foes. A nervous disorder seems to have existed in his system which, as in the case of skin disease in Peter the Great, gave rise to wonderful energy. A love of power was his mastering passion, nor was he scrupulous as to means to obtain it.

Prior to his appointment, Stanton had received many favors at the hand of Black who at this time was much attached to him.<sup>22a</sup> and see it through its trouble.' 'I am glad to hear it. I agree with you exactly. You should stand by the President,' I replied. 'Well, you go and see the President in the morning unless you should hear from me in the meantime,' he said. I promised, but before the time arrived for me to see Mr. Buchanan and request a withdrawal of the resignation, Judge Black had been appointed, and General Cass sent me word that he would let it stand."

Buchanan wrote Toucey that "on December 17, 1860, both Mr. Thompson and Judge Black informed that they had held conversation with General Cass on the subject of his resignation." Curtis, Vol. II, p. 600, answered on p. 621.

See text above.

Judge Holt to Burr, of the *Philadelphia Press*, 1881:

"I reasoned with him after I knew of his determination, and reasoned with him against his act. He said: 'Holt, you are a Southern man, and represent a very different constituency from mine. You can stay, but I cannot, for the sentiment of my section will not sustain me.' I reasoned that it was the duty of every man who was loyal to the Union to stay and do his best to save the Union."

A letter written to Black some time in 1860 by a Mr. Shunk, perhaps his son-in-law, gave him a good warning which he did not heed. It read as follows:

"You may depend upon it that Stanton is *not a perfectly fair man*. *Don't start*. I have made up my mind upon that point not hastily or rashly but upon sufficient evidence. Mr. Randolph is one of my authorities. He has promised to show me letters from Stanton to him in which Mr. S. tells him that he has no influence upon you whatever—that he is not *upon intimate terms* with you and that in California matters you don't consult him at all. . . . You may rely on it that he has not done the fair thing with you. He has suffered you to bear all the odium of any disagreeable things you may have done even at his suggestion by representing that he was not on terms of intimacy with you."—Black Papers, L. C.

<sup>22a</sup> "Stanton we all know was a tree of his own planting around whose infant roots a good deal of Federal comfort in the way of fees were laid." *Baltimore Gazette*, July 9, 1878.

He was also on terms of personal friendship with Buchanan. Before his Cabinet appointment he had been employed under the direction of Black in contesting California land grants upon the behalf of the United States Government. When Aaron V. Brown, Postmaster-General, died, Black had urged Stanton on Buchanan as Postmaster-General, but Thompson was more successful, and Holt was appointed.

The reason for his appointment was that Black<sup>23</sup> had had some legal business before the Supreme Court with Stanton, and desired to have a personal friend in the Attorney General's Department.<sup>24</sup> Black was very fond of Stanton at this time, but later became his bitter opponent.

In later life Stanton said that Buchanan had asked his opinion before writing the message of December, 1860.<sup>24a</sup> Stanton claimed that he had convinced the President of the right of the Federal Government to coerce a State.<sup>25</sup> Black said that it was all a lie. The best reason he gave was that Stanton approved of Black's memorandum of 1860 to the President, which is known to have been an entirely different opinion.<sup>26</sup> It is probably true that Stanton interviewed Buchanan on this subject, but the result upon Buchanan was far from Stanton's view of the matter because Buchanan wrote his niece long before the controversy arose that Stanton knew little constitutional law.<sup>27</sup> Buchanan was inclined to under-rate rather than over-rate Stanton's ability.

In 1862 Thurlow Weed published an exaggerated report of this Cabinet scene<sup>28</sup> in which it would seem that the Cabinet had deliberately insulted Buchanan by peremptorily handing in their resignations because he was inclined to send Anderson back to Moultrie. Stanton seems to have made the most of it among his Republican friends, but he admitted it was exaggerated though "substantially correct." Weed's article was not only exaggerated,

<sup>23</sup> Black, "Black's Works," p. 269.

<sup>24</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 247.

<sup>24a</sup> See preparation of the message below.

<sup>25</sup> See Henry Wilson, *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XXV, p. 236; Vol. XXVI, pp. 468, 469.

<sup>26</sup> Black, "Black's Works," pp. 275-276.

<sup>27</sup> Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan," Vol. II, p. 522.

<sup>28</sup> Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan," Vol. II, p. 519.



but his data was incorrect as he included Dix,<sup>29</sup> who was not in the Cabinet at that time, as among the members. No member of the Northern group ever spoke to the President at this time directly about resigning save Black, and perhaps Toucey (See below).

Weed was not entirely to blame, for he received the news thirdhand,<sup>30</sup> and only wrote what he heard. On the other hand he was the paid agent of the Government, and used his material without inquiry to injure an old enemy. Upon such matters Buchanan was altogether too thin-skinned, and he was much offended by the incident. He said he could have ignored it in America, but he was very sensitive about his reputation in England.

As there will be occasion to discuss this note later, the sole question that here arises is whether or not Stanton deliberately insulted the President. Black emphatically said that such was not the case.<sup>31</sup> When the President asked the opinion of his Cabinet upon the question of ordering Anderson back to Fort Moultrie, Stanton replied that anyone who participated in such an event would be hanged like André, and a President of the United States who would make such an order would be guilty of treason.<sup>32</sup> This was strong language, but it was clothed with proper decency, and not spoken directly at Buchanan.

Black, at an earlier date, had said that no minister of England ever urged his sovereign to relinquish a post capable of being defended without being brought to the block. Buchanan had thought Black's expression a harsh one, but did not deny it. Buchanan had never at the time or later believed that Stanton had intended to insult him, although he was rather hurt at the matter as will appear later. Holt says Buchanan answered, "Oh, no! Not so bad as that, my friend,—not so bad as that!" and raised his hands depreciatingly at Stanton's remarks.

<sup>29</sup> For the story and Dix' refutation see: Morgan Dix, "Memoirs of John A. Dix," New York, 1883, Vol. I, pp. 378-380.

<sup>30</sup> Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan," Vol. II, pp. 520-521.

<sup>31</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 266.

<sup>32</sup> Gorham, "Edwin M. Stanton," Vol. I, p. 158. For a slightly different version see: F. A. Flower, "Stanton, the Autocrat of the Rebellion," New York, 1905, p. 95.



This was Stanton's first "official" appearance in the Cabinet. Had Buchanan believed Stanton intended to be discourteous, he would have discharged him at once; and Black, who loved Buchanan as a brother, would have applauded his action. It is to be noted that in his statement of the case, which has been given in Flower's biography<sup>33</sup> and has been set forth above, and which he had prepared, but did not give to the public, Stanton neglected the aftermath of the incident.

Thomas, who remained a Democrat to the last, and who was personally more or less indifferent to Buchanan, supplies the missing data and dispassionately reviews the incident. In answer to the question, "Were the Cabinet meetings of those days harmonious?" he replied:

"Naturally there was more or less feeling displayed in the discussion of the Southern question. Floyd at times got quite boisterous. I shall call to mind one occasion especially when the President chided both Black and Stanton for some remarks calculated to provoke heated discussion. Judge Black had said that there never was a time when a Cabinet Officer could propose to give up a Fort capable of being defended without being brought to the block. Floyd got very excited at this, and Buchanan thought the expression a very harsh one and rather took the Judge to task for making such positive expressions, likely to stir up discussions. Then turning to Mr. Stanton he called his attention to some vigorous remark some days before in relation to Southern affairs, and expressed his emphatic disapproval of such harsh expressions. Indeed he spoke very sharply to Stanton, but he took it without reply. Indeed Mr. Stanton had very little to say during those days rather seeming to stand behind Judge Black who was his friend."<sup>34</sup>

The idea of Stanton's great influence is partly due to the fact that Buchanan's policy seemed to change somewhat about the time Stanton entered the cabinet; and because of eulogies heaped upon Stanton by Henry Wilson, Senator Hoar, Flower, and others. Even Stanton's tempered biographer accepts that theory. There is a statement by Secretary Thompson which would seem

<sup>33</sup> Flower, "Stanton, the Autocrat of the Rebellion," p. 95, for a digested account. Flower is an ardent admirer of Stanton and very anti-Southern in feeling.

<sup>34</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 14, 1881.

to credit such an idea but the whole theory is based upon the fallacy of false cause.<sup>35, 36</sup>

The change in Buchanan's tactics was due to Anderson's interference with his policy; the inflamed condition of the Northern public press; to an increasing distrust of the South and their accusing him of breaking a pledge, and to the councils of Judge Black, who felt that he would have to withdraw from the cabinet. Thompson did not know of this interview, therefore he thought the change was due to Stanton.

It was not Stanton, but Black, who presented the objections to his note to the South Carolina Commissioners to Buchanan.

Stanton, speaking of it, said: <sup>37</sup>

"Judge Black is closer to the President than myself and exercises a great deal of influence over him. He will present the written objections which I have prepared <sup>37a</sup> and stand by for the purpose of extricating the President from his present peril."

Stanton's influence with Black no doubt was a considerable factor, but Buchanan considered him too rash and impulsive a councilor and Buchanan detested rash council.

In 1862 Buchanan said the course of his ministers was without parallel. However, in the heated condition of the public mind at that time, such course was only prudent, as a denial would not have been believed by anybody.<sup>38</sup>

In the main Stanton's attitude was agreeable and as deferential as Buchanan and Black had said.<sup>39</sup> He showed the same trait

<sup>35</sup> Gorham, "Edwin M. Stanton," Boston, 1899, Vol. I, p. 189.

<sup>36</sup> A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 532; Thompson to Cobb, January 6, 1860.

<sup>37</sup> Stanton to Robinson of Pittsburgh, December 30, 1860; Flower, "Stanton, the Autocrat of the Rebellion," pp. 90, 91.

This is due to the fact that a short time before, Black, without the knowledge of Thompson, had his interview with Buchanan, Stanton became a member of the cabinet.

<sup>37a</sup> Black, not Stanton, wrote the first copy.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 263.

<sup>39</sup> "Perhaps no calumny that was uttered against him hurt his feelings or injured his character more than that by which he was represented as being bullied and dragooned by Stanton and others. Stanton never but once ventured beyond the line of mere obsequiousness and then was driven back to his place cowering under the lash of the President's reprimand."—*Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881.

This is practically the same statement as made by Thomas.

when Schofield<sup>40</sup> came to take over his office at Johnson's order. Stanton was never a brave man when he felt the ground slipping under his feet. It is certain that he tried Lincoln's patience more than Buchanan's because he had greatly swelled out with his success at running the Union war machine.<sup>41</sup> At times he behaved like a Nero.

He did not put on high manners in the Cabinet.<sup>42</sup> He loved power but was not yet sure of himself. When Stanton feared dethronement he always resorted to flattery.<sup>43</sup> Long before the Weed letter was known, Buchanan had written to his niece commenting upon Stanton:

He never took much part in cabinet councils, because his office did not require it. He was always on my side and flattered me ad nauseam.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Buchanan was not particularly favorable towards Stanton at first, but seemed to have liked him better as time went on. Blaine wisely observes that if Stanton had possessed the influence he claimed, Buchanan would have vetoed the Morrill Tariff Bill, which Stanton opposed.<sup>45</sup>

In his letters to Buchanan, Stanton, before he became Secretary of War, displays all due respect for his chief, but some of these letters were so indecent in condemnation of Lincoln that Buchanan's relatives courteously kept the worst ones out of print.<sup>46</sup>

Stanton had intrigued with Sumner and Seward officially for the "safety of the Union," but, in the minds of others, his object was to get office under the Republicans. The failure of "Old Abe" to appoint him was doubtless the cause of his bitterness. Upon his appointment to the War Office, Stanton began to turn, and later poured out similar torrents of abuse upon his old Demo-

<sup>40</sup> Poore, "Perley's Reminiscences," Vol. II, p. 230.

<sup>41</sup> A. K. McClure, "Lincoln and Men of War Times," pp. 170-173.

<sup>42</sup> Black, "Black's Works," p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> Poore, "Perley's Reminiscences," Vol. II, p. 230.

<sup>44</sup> Moore, Curtis, Vol. II, p. 523. By this he meant he was for upholding his prerogative. This was probably a private letter and could not have been intended for public use. Buchanan had no idea of what was coming.

<sup>45</sup> Blaine, "Twenty Years of Congress," Vol. I, p. 562.

<sup>46</sup> McClure, "Lincoln and Men of War Times," pp. 157, 158.

cratic friends. He utterly lacked self-control but never suffered much for it. He was honest, and too able for Lincoln to discharge. Lincoln patiently endured his contemptible meanness. Flower glories in the indications of the fact that Stanton aided in getting ready to impeach Buchanan if he disapproved of his policy.

When Stanton encountered Andrew Johnson, he found a man who had an energetic tongue as himself, and the same disposition to use it. The result was that, despite all his writhing and a great deal of partisan support, he came to a well-merited downfall.

The conclusion is that Stanton had but little influence with the President, but that he proved of aid to Black's views in cabinet discussions. Public honesty, love of country, and ability are the bright side of the picture, but he also showed extreme and dangerous duplicity to those he served. He was the type of man who is to be avoided, or at least not treated with confidence.

It is one of the paradoxes of history that Holt seems to have received his first major appointment from a man whom he later ceaselessly pursued with a malignant hatred. Aaron V. Brown (Tennessee), Postmaster-General, died in 1857. Buchanan, according to Thompson, said:

"I want a man for the Postoffice Department who has no heart. Brown was a man of great ability, but he was altogether too good-natured to withstand the appeals and intrigues of the people who had business with his Department, and things want to be straightened out down there. It will take a strong, resolute man, with none of the milk of human kindness in his veins, to do the work."

"I have got just the man for the place in my Department," said Mr. Thompson. "He will fill the bill exactly."

"Who is it?" asked two or three members of the Cabinet in the same breath.

"Joe Holt," Thompson replied.<sup>47</sup>

There was a laugh all around. Black brought up Stanton's name, and for several days a contest ensued, with the final result that Holt was appointed.

Holt furiously repudiated the above statement, and claimed his appointment was due to some personal services which, unknown

<sup>47</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, probably March 4, 1884.

to Thompson, had brought him to the President's attention.<sup>48</sup> Probably both men were partially correct.

Holt did some vigorous work in the Postoffice Department. Three famous dismissals were Westcott of Philadelphia, Fowler of New York, and Cook of Chicago. From the start he filled the bill. While he disclaimed any disagreement in later years when he had become rabidly anti-Southern, Holt seems to have been more favorable to Buchanan's policy than Black or Stanton. On the other hand, he had become so disliked and feared in Southern circles, that when his nomination was sent to the Senate to succeed Floyd as Secretary of War, Slidell and other Senators left no stone unturned to secure its defeat. Southern papers<sup>49</sup> said that Buchanan was going over to the Coercionists. Holt's brother disapproved of any violent measure, and begged Holt to come away before war started.<sup>50</sup> Holt's agreement with Buchanan's policy was repeatedly and vigorously expressed upon various occasions. One is as follows:

I wish distinctly to say that I believe Mr. Buchanan was in all respects and at all times true to the union. He believed and so did I, that a war during his administration, especially if we began it, would result in the destruction of the Union. It was his policy to preserve the peace if possible and hand over the Government intact to his successor. Mr. Stanton, Judge Black, and myself differed at times with him as to the best way to do this, but we were agreed that it must be done.

It was Holt who figured in the severing of friendly relations between Buchanan and Slidell. Slidell had secured the appointment of his brother-in-law, Beauregard, to promotion over five or six other officers. Holt annulled the promotion and Slidell wrote a note to Buchanan, desiring to know whether he was responsible for Holt's action. Buchanan upon receiving the letter handed it to Holt and said, "Read this." Holt wrathfully replied, "Mr. President, we have heard this crack of the overseer's whip over our heads long enough. This is an outrage,—it is one that Senator Slidell has no right to address you." "I think so myself

<sup>48</sup> Pamphlet of Holt against Thompson, pp. 8-9, L. C.

<sup>49</sup> *E.g., Richmond Enquirer*, January 5, 1861.

<sup>50</sup> Holt to Holt, Yazoo City, January 10, 1861, L. C.

and will write him to that effect," the President answered. "No," said Holt, "I feel that I have a right, Mr. President, to ask that you do more than this; that you will say to Senator Slidell without explanation that this is your act; for you know that as Secretary of War I am simply your representative, and if my acts as such are not your acts, then they are nothing."

The President agreed, and wrote on the spot a reply in which he informed Slidell that Holt's "acts in the line of his duty are my own acts, for which I am responsible."

Buchanan and Holt were warm friends at the close of the Administration. Buchanan said warmly, "Holt, you have been true." "I have tried to be," was the response.<sup>52, 53</sup>

He also wrote an excellent testimony in his official letter of resignation, which Buchanan deeply appreciated. Later Buchanan felt somewhat estranged due to a speech in which he thought Holt praised Stanton too highly, and again, when some time afterward, he accepted a Republican position. No doubt Holt had the Weed story in mind, and the fact that he had been silent in 1863, when in 1881 he said:

I never had a doubt but that at some time justice would be done him and his Administration. It could not be done in the heat of war which followed it. No man's word in its behalf, no matter how prominent his loyalty, would have been accepted or his motives understood.<sup>54</sup>

The quarrel between Holt and Thompson was long and bitter. Holt was exceedingly vindictive. Dix and Black said to each other that Thompson and Holt were both good men, and they hoped it would cease.

When Holt was made Secretary of War, Horatio King, who had survived the Silliman letter episode, was elevated from the place of First Assistant to Postmaster-General.<sup>54a</sup> During the

<sup>51</sup> Crawford, S. W., "Genesis of the Civil War," p. 276. Crawford says it was a place at West Point. Holt in the *Philadelphia Press* in 1881 says promotion. King, "Turning on the Light," p. 57, gives the letter. West Point is mentioned.

<sup>52</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August, 1881, H. S. P.

<sup>53</sup> Also Holt Pamphlet, 1861, L. C.

<sup>54</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, 1881, H. S. P.

<sup>54a</sup> King was appointed acting Postmaster-General, January 1, 1861; he

early part of December he had busied himself in getting people of Northern sentiments to bombard the Administration with letters,<sup>55</sup> and had devoted himself to trying to persuade the President to still the voice of the *Constitution*, which was going over to Secession, although it was still supposed to be the organ of the Administration.

Buchanan probably did not desire to be accused of suppressing a publication solely because of its political views. The paper increased in volume of its tone, and he finally wrote the editor a private letter requesting him to state that its opinions were not his own. The editor immediately complied with the request with a statement in his paper (December 27, 1860). In January the President finally felt justified in rescinding the Government advertising in the *Constitution's* columns, and this fact, and its falling off in circulation soon caused its death.

King was one of the few members of a department to be promoted to its head. He fulfilled his duties very acceptably, but does not seem to have enjoyed much of Buchanan's confidence until after his term was over, when he helped the ex-President gather some of the material for his book.<sup>56</sup> During the Civil War some of the old Cabinet received favors under the new régime. King accepted a position in the Bureau fixing the value of freed slaves. This political apostasy mortified Buchanan somewhat, but he was too kind-hearted to pass any censure on King.

King had journalistic talent, and even took a hand at writing poetry. He collected some of his articles in a book "Turning on the Light," published in 1895. Many of the articles contain valuable primary material, and testify to the fine traits of Buchanan's character.

His anti-Southern views, which increased as years went on, spoiled much of his work. His later article calling Toucey a Secessionist is incorrect in its charge, to say the least. He also gave some wrong impressions on the state of Buchanan's health, was nominated by the President on the 1st of February; and confirmed by the Senate in the appointment on the 12th of February. King, "Turning on the Light," p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> King, "Turning on the Light," Chapter I.

<sup>56</sup> See letters in Curtis, Vol. II, from King to Buchanan.



and the reasons for Floyd's and Cobb's resignations.<sup>57</sup> His book, however, served a real need, and, notwithstanding some errors, is a valuable one of the period.

Few persons have suffered more from historical injustice than Isaac Toucey, Buchanan's Secretary of Navy. An attempt will be made to recount his relations with Buchanan at the close of the Administration and to dispel some popular delusions that have been propagated to his detriment.

There are three erroneous impressions concerning Toucey's policy at this period: the first, that he was a Secessionist; the second, that he deliberately scattered the fleet at this juncture; and the third, that he was a colorless, negative sort of individual.

<sup>57</sup> Pamphlet by King privately published, New York, 1894.

Holt's *Changes of Mind*:

The following excerpt shows Holt's attitude on the date mentioned:

"I am still for the Union because I have yet a faint hesitating hope that the North will do justice to the South and save the Republic before the wreck is complete. But action to be available must be prompt." From Robert Gourdin, quoting a letter of Holt, November 30, 1860, letter of Gourdin, January 27, 1861, L. C.

On the 14th of March he wrote Buchanan that the new administration seemed to be pacific and was pleased with the idea. See Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 167, 168.

On May 24th he declared that Buchanan made a mistake in not sending troops to Sumter. He was much opposed to the South at this time. See Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 196, 197.

But in 1881 he said: "I am convinced that the feeling that they first fired upon the flag aroused our people to a point of enthusiasm which carried us through the war." See King, "Turning on the Light," p. 121.

"But when you take into consideration the conspicuous party divisions, the peaceful inclination of our people, and the attitude of Congress, it is easy to see that those acts of conciliation on the part of the Government and its officers at the time were wisest and best." *Philadelphia Press*, August, 1881.

The following statement was made over the removal of Post-master Cook in Chicago:

"I shall moreover never for a moment place my judgment or wishes in conflict with yours, to which it is my pleasure to defer." Holt to Buchanan, December 6, 1859.

Buchanan believed Cook had been framed, and was inclined to sustain him. Later, however, he was allowed to resign as his conduct seemed to have been irregular. It shows who was the President in fact as well as name. Holt was one of the strongest men in the cabinet.

Toucey was one of the ablest constitutional lawyers of his day. He had been Attorney-General for a time under Polk. His reputation as a legalist was among the first in his State. Unlike the rest of the Cabinet, save Cass, he was a man of somewhere near Buchanan's age, and like him held views characteristic of the period that was drawing to a close.

Toucey was not a Secessionist. When Buchanan's first message (December 3, 1860) came up before the Cabinet, Floyd's diary<sup>58</sup> states that Toucey approved it while the Southern members opposed it on the Secession issue. He alone endorsed Buchanan's first draft to the South Carolina Commissioners,<sup>59</sup> and did not hesitate to oppose Stanton in the matter, a fact that Stanton took pains to remember by vilifying his name at a later date.<sup>60</sup> When Buchanan declined to move Anderson back to Moultrie upon Hunter's request, Toucey again endorsed Buchanan's stand as the only thing possible under the circumstances.<sup>61</sup> The very fact that Toucey supported the President, who all the while opposed the constitutional right of Secession, is evidence enough.

Black did not like it because Toucey seemed disinclined to "go crosswise" of the President,<sup>62</sup> but Toucey had no reason for doing so. Black also was angry because he thought Toucey told Buchanan the *Brooklyn* could not clear the bar at Charleston. Hence the idea he gave that Toucey was indifferent.<sup>63</sup>

The error regarding Toucey's scattering of the fleet was probably based on a very partisan congressional report, which was characteristic of the Republicans at that period, before he left office. Later Toucey himself was called to testify before another committee, where he handed some very hot shots to Congress. He showed that the home squadron was unusually large at the time as compared with some previous periods. He had desired converting some of the ships into steam frigates. As to the ships out of repair, he had notified Congress of the fact; Congress,

<sup>58</sup> Pollard, "Lee and His Lieutenants," p. 794.

<sup>59</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 149.

<sup>60</sup> Gideon Wells, *Diary*, Vol. II, pp. 272, 273.

<sup>61</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 159; Trescott to Cobb, January 14, 1861; A. H. A., 1916, pp. 529, 530.

<sup>62</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, 1881.

<sup>63</sup> Black to Buchanan, January 19, 1861; Black Papers, 1861-1862. L. C.

however, had not only paid no heed, but had seen fit to cut the appropriations of the Department.<sup>64</sup>

Although a rather taciturn man, Toucey had plenty of spirit. The following letter is a vigorous statement of his political faith and indicates a vigorous character. The matter of Fort Pickens is thoroughly discussed.

Ex-Gov. Toucey to Buchanan, June 5, 1861:

MY DEAR SIR:

I find myself obliged at last to reply to your very welcome letter without being able to give a copy of the joint Order which Mr. Holt & myself sent to the military & naval forces near Pensacola. It was prepared as I understood by Mr. Holt upon consultation with General Scott & with his full concurrence, & sent to the Navy Dept., where I certainly concurred in it & affixed to it my official signature. I have written to the present Sec. of the Navy for a copy but get no answer. I recollect very well the object & purport of it. It was issued during the session of the Peace Convention at Washington to prevent a collision & to hold things for the time being in *statu quo*. The troops on board the Brooklyn were not for the present to be landed nor any aggressive movement to be made, if the troops on the other side abstained from any attack & from any further preparation for attack. The Order was a very stringent one against any hostile movement or preparation by the Secessionists and required in that event the most prompt & vigorous action by the U. S. forces. Mr. Holt undoubtedly has a copy of it. I shall hereafter send you one if I can obtain it.

The naval force assembled at Pensacola under y<sup>r</sup>. Adm<sup>n</sup>. consisted of the Steam Ship Brooklyn, the frigate Sabine, the sloop of War Macedonia, the Steamer Wyandotte, & for a time the

<sup>64</sup> Senate Reports, 37th Congress, 2d session, No. 37, pp. 58, 59, 234.

For the account of the Toucey-Ward expedition prepared to relieve Sumter, see Curtis, Vol. II, p. 621.

The committee had to satisfy itself by criticising Toucey for allowing certain officers to resign who later joined the confederates. The same thing happened in England during the Ulster troubles when British officers resigned rather than fight their own people and who no doubt would have defended Ulster had she been attacked, yet no serious criticism was made against them. England is still the home of much honest common sense. The Minority Report said no evidence proved that Toucey knew of the future intent of those officers.

Senate Reports, 37th Congress, 2d session, No. 87, p. 13, *et seq.*

sloop of War St. Louis. Without including the troops on board the Brooklyn, this Squadron c<sup>d</sup>. have thrown a re-inforcement of six or seven hundred men into Fort Pickens at any time. I have not been able to discover that any additional force has been sent there. The only list I have seen, one recently published, comprehended no more. There was never any difficulty in re-inforcing Fort Pickens. This was perfectly well understood. However all that makes no difference. The re-inforcement under this Adm<sup>n</sup>. is trumpeted as a great feat, although they have only done what we were prepared to do, & enabled them to do, at any moment.

I am surprised that young Seward sh<sup>d</sup>. say anything that might be considered an attack on the peace policy of y<sup>r</sup>. Adm<sup>r</sup>. for I called on Gov. Seward at the State Dept. soon after he assumed its duties & the tenor of his language was altogether for peace & conciliation, & I was as strongly impressed by it as Judge Campbell appears to have been on another occasion. However we ought not to be surprised at anything. The present Federal Executive has cut loose from the restraints of the Constitution & laws, & is now carrying on without authority the most disastrous war this country was ever engaged in—more disastrous than w<sup>d</sup>. be a combined attack upon us by all the nations of Europe. What right has a Pres<sup>t</sup>. of the U. S. to enlist for three years an army of 100 or 150,000 men without the authority of Congress? What right has he to blockade half our ports & to suspend our commercial treaties with England, France & the other countries? What right has he to disperse the militia of Missouri organized and assembled under the laws of the U. S. & of Missouri with the flag of the Union floating over them? What right has he to seize the City of Alexandria & occupy it by force which he had no authority to enlist, to arrest citizens for alleged offences against the laws & shut them up in camp, proclaim martial law & suspend the *Habeas Corpus*? What right has he by an order of the Atty. Genl. to invade the sanctity of private correspondence & seize summarily and simultaneously the private papers of all the Northern Telegraph Offices? What right has he without consulting Congress to plunge the country in a hundred millions of debt to be followed inevitably by an immensely larger one? The public mind may be paralyzed momentarily by atrocious usurpations, but they cannot pass unnoticed. A day of terrible reckoning will certainly come. It w<sup>d</sup>. be a libel on the whole history of this country to suppose that it can settle down under a military depotism.

I left Washington on the 26th of March & went directly home. I found my friends ready to receive me. They gave me

an enthusiastic welcome. The Mayor of the City addressed me & I responded. At the General Election which occurred on the following Monday, it happened after a severe contest that the Republicans in the City & town of Hartford were defeated by more than 500 majority—a very gratifying result. But since that time Fort Sumter has been cannonaded, the pacific policy which you inaugurated which kept the border states in the Union, & w<sup>d</sup>. have given the Union men of the Cotton States the ascendancy & brot them back to us, has been abandoned, the war policy adopted, & the country precipitated into an abyss which no human eye can penetrate.

The morning I left for home, Judge Black called & spent an hour with me. I understood it was his intention to continue in Washington. He was still residing with Lt. Harrison where he has been from the time he gave up his house on Franklin Square.

Mrs. Toucey wishes to be presented most kindly to yourself & Miss Lane. Will you please present to her my warmest regards & attachment

I am

With the highest respect & esteem  
most faithfully

Your friend

I. TOUCEY.<sup>65</sup>

During the war he suffered much petty persecution. At one time during the Civil War his picture was taken from among the portraits of the Governors in the State House at Hartford, but with the subsiding of popular wrath it was restored. Buchanan remarked that the Republicans were trying to make a scapegoat of Toucey.<sup>66</sup>

In the years that followed his Presidency, Buchanan wrote:

Our constant agreement in all important measures is a solace and comfort and endears you to me in a peculiar manner.<sup>67</sup>

The following are extracts from Mrs. Toucey to Buchanan's niece, Harriet Lane.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> From Buchanan Papers, H. S. P.

<sup>66</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 243.

<sup>67</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 587.

<sup>68</sup> Buchanan-Lane Papers, L. C. October 9, 1862; June 19, 1863.

Toucey placed the following remarks in his official resignation:

"I have witnessed the indefatigable industry, the disinterested patriotism the self sacrificing devotion, the anxious endeavor to be right in all your

You speak feelingly of our country's trouble. There is not on the page of History a record of madness and folly as we have at present. At this age of the world to resort to arms for the settlement of any difficulty is an evidence that we have not so far emerged from barbarism as we had supposed, and in spite of our boasted progress the moral advance has been very slow. Surely President Buchanan's policy was wise and Christian, and will be thought so by all the world. One of the painful consequences of this cruel war is the separation from Southern friends. We have a lovely niece, the daughter-in-law of Gen. Polk, who is ensconced on a plantation somewhere in Louisiana for whom we feel great sympathy for so obnoxious is the family name, we are unable to address letters to her nor she, nor any member of Gen. Polk's family dare place their signature to letters to us sent by mail. . . .

Would that his [Buchanan's] mantle had fallen upon his successor & that peace might have been preserved to our . . . harassed country.

The writer once styled John B. Floyd the Black Sheep of the Cabinet. Further search into the sources have led him to the conclusion that it would be more just to call him the scapegoat of Northern public opinion.

Floyd was a man of real personality and ability, save perhaps in dealing with contractors. He was active, alert, always attending to his duties except when utterly unable to be about. The administration of his office force seems to have been able. The army was kept in as good state of fitness as the funds would allow. He was generous,—too much influenced by selfish persons for his own good. If he was careless in the giving of contracts or funds of the Government, he was the same in his own business. He was at least an able administrator, except on items of finance.

Letters have been given in this material which show that Buchanan never had a more loyal or devoted member of his Cabinet than the Secretary of War. He has never been given due credit for strongly disapproving of a plot to kidnap Buchanan suggested to him by Wigfal.<sup>69</sup>

decisions, and the consummate prudence and ability which have marked your entire course through greater difficulties than ever before beset the path of the chief magistrate of the country." Toucey to Buchanan.

<sup>69</sup> *North American Review*, February, 1887, p. 179.



There are three charges once believed about Floyd, all of which have been disapproved. The charge that he used his position to supply the South with arms; that he plundered the Interior Department bonds; and that he was a Secessionist at heart. Even a Congressional Committee of his opponents was forced to admit that he had not so prostituted his office. Even Mr. Rhodes has deigned to admit this fact. He did, in 1860, act as an agent of some of the Southern States to buy some condemned muskets which were purchasable by any bidder. If any one of the Southern States feared attack from any quarter, they certainly had a right to buy arms from any place as a commercial transaction. Such an act did not in itself indicate a wish to break the Union.<sup>70</sup> Most of the guns sold in 1859 were so poor that the State of Louisiana, which bought some, refused to keep the contract. A few small arms were distributed in advance, as had often happened before, in 1861, but were sent to Northern as well as to Southern States. Others of the Southern States, for fear of negro revolts, did not ask for their quotas in 1861 or several years before that time. In any case, the amount was relatively of little account.<sup>71</sup> Considering the things Floyd could have done and did not do, points to much in his favor.<sup>72</sup> He sent nothing to Virginia; he knew the efficiency of the Southern cavalry, but sent not a sabre; he knew the Southern need of artillery, but sent not a gun before December, 1860. He sent no ammunition. By law such guns as were shipped were shipped on application to the Ordnance Bureau without any special order from the head of the Department.<sup>73</sup>

On the question of shipping from Pittsburgh to the South, Floyd has again been charged with breach of trust. The oral order was given to Captain Maynadier on October 20, 1860, because Floyd was sick in bed. No great storm-clouds had yet

<sup>70</sup> For the "Stolen Arms" see: Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 409-417; King, "Turning on the Light," Chapter XVII; Black, "Black's Essays," p. 266 *et seq.*

Black says the South did not get their quota (probably larger guns) in 1860.

<sup>71</sup> King, *ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>72</sup> Tyler's *Quarterly*, January, 1921, p. 155.

<sup>73</sup> Tyler's *Quarterly*, January, 1921, p. 155.



arisen. There was no special reason for selecting Pittsburgh save for convenience. The forts were not yet completed, but precedents could be found where guns had been sent and mounted on platforms in such cases. (Floyd's political attitude in this period will be shown below.) On December 20th, Floyd gave a final order for shipping these cannon. This was at a time when things were relatively quiet. Only South Carolina had seceded. It would be interesting to note whether Floyd gave this order before he heard this news. Even then Floyd no doubt only thought of being prepared against unconstitutional Northern acts. There was also no reason to believe that other States would follow, if something were done to compromise the difficulties. The cannon were not sent to a firebrand State.<sup>74</sup>

When the news reached Pittsburgh, there was a furore. A mass meeting was held at which a friend of Buchanan's, William Wilkins, and a brother-in-law of Stanton, James A. Hutchinson, took a prominent part.<sup>75</sup> These men got into touch with Stanton, who went to Buchanan about it. Buchanan saw nothing to worry about, but he asked Black about the orders, and referred a telegraph from Pittsburgh to Floyd immediately upon receiving it.<sup>76</sup> Black said the orders were correct,<sup>77</sup> but privately advised Buchanan to rescind the order in view of the excited condition of affairs.<sup>78</sup>

A committee was sent up to Washington from Pittsburgh including Hutchinson. Stanton and the delegation saw the President. He consulted with Holt and as a result gave orders to revoke the shipment.<sup>79</sup> Hutchinson telegraphed the order to Pittsburgh and the matter ended.<sup>80</sup> There was no such extreme excitement either in Washington or the South such as was to take

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, October, 1923, p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> Clipping, H. S. P. "Who Stopped the Cannon?"

<sup>76</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, p. 88.

<sup>77</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 309.

<sup>78</sup> Black to Buchanan, "Xmas Night," 1860, H. S. P.

<sup>79</sup> There is considerable reason to believe that at this time Buchanan did not expect any State to follow South Carolina out of the Union. *E.g.*, Trescot's opinion, A. H. R., April, 1908. Trescot's *opinions* in some cases are not true to fact but I see no reason to doubt this one.

<sup>80</sup> H. S. P. clipping: "Who Stopped the Cannon?"

place at the end of the month. The secession of South Carolina was not unexpected. It has yet to be proved that Floyd sent the second order for any special reason. This was also sent before the bond theft was discovered, which tends to discount the idea that it was a peace offering of Floyd to the radicals of his section as Buchanan and Black believed.

For some time before December, 1860, Floyd's carelessness in business matters had pained the President and some of his colleagues,<sup>81</sup> but had been endured because of compensating ability in other lines.

Captain Meigs (consulting engineer, in charge of the building of the Washington aqueduct) and Floyd had quarreled bitterly over some contracts upon the building of the Capitol, and Floyd had been on the point of resigning in September, 1860. Floyd wanted Meigs stationed elsewhere. Buchanan left the matter with Black<sup>82</sup> as Attorney-General, who seems to have sustained Floyd, as he remained.

In 1858 Floyd began to issue acceptances. In 1860 he was warned by Senator Benjamin that he might get into trouble in case any accidents happened to the supplies.

The initial part of the story of the abstracted bonds has been ably summed up by a Floyd defendant (Judge Robert M. Hughes):

During Buchanan's administration the Mormons had been giving trouble, and an expedition had been sent to Utah under Col. A. S. Johnston to control them. It was called the "Utah War." The troops had to be supplied by wagons across the Great American Desert, some of which were intercepted by the Mormons.

<sup>81</sup> Black, "Black's Essays."

This was due to Floyd's insistence on the payment of a huge claim known as the de Groot claim which Black, as Attorney-General, held illegal. Buchanan became much vexed at Floyd's lack of financial finesse, and he lost influence in such matters with the President. "Mr Buchanan's wrath was thoroughly aroused when he heard of the Secretary's assent to the payment of a large claim in the face of the Attorney-General's opinion that it was unjust and illegal. By his stern command the money was stopped before it reached the hands of the claimant."—"Black's Essays," p. 13.

(This is a statement of fact garbed in somewhat rhetorical language.)

<sup>82</sup> Buchanan to Black, September 8, 1860, H. S. P. See Meigs letter-book (L. C.) for his hatred of Floyd.

The slowness of communication caused great delay in the accounts, and the panic of 1857 impaired the ability of Russel, Majors & Waddell, the contractors, to handle their contract. Floyd therefore, at their request, accepted their drafts or orders upon him, to be charged against their earnings. If he had not done so, the troops might have starved; there was a clerk in the Interior Department named Godard Bailey. His wife was a cousin of Floyd, and he owed his job to Floyd. On December 19th it was discovered that he had abstracted from the invested Indian funds of the Interior Department \$879,000 of the state bonds and turned them over to Russel, receiving as collateral an equivalent amount of the Floyd acceptances. He claimed to have done it to protect Floyd's reputation, on the theory that Floyd would have to resign if the acceptances were protested. (A. I. B. 259:270.) He gave Drinkard, Floyd's chief clerk, as his authority for this supposed result; but Drinkard denied that he had ever said anything of the sort (A. I. B. 120). His speculations had been going on since the previous July, and some of the acceptances had in fact been protested as far back as September without any such result. There was never a syllable of evidence to show that Floyd knew anything about it till the exposure. . . . He left Washington so poor that he had to borrow money to pay his expenses home. (Black 13; Rhodes, Vol. II, pp. 111, 238.) The worst that had been said of him even by the committee ostensibly investigating the Interior Department, but really investigating him, was that he was careless in keeping an account of these acceptances.<sup>83</sup>

The act was politically justifiable and legally much could be said for it. In 1862 Black upheld the bonds, and accepted a retainer from one of the holders. Caleb Cushing sustained them, and three of the eight judges of the Supreme Court voted for their legality. If Floyd was wrong, he was in good legal company.<sup>84</sup>

The Government was in an embarrassing situation. Some friends of Nahum Capen, Postmaster of Boston, and an intimate friend of Buchanan, had inquired of Black and Buchanan about the acceptances, and had been told that if Floyd did it it must be all right.<sup>85</sup> Benjamin had spoken to the President about it quite a while before. Buchanan replied that if Floyd had done it there

<sup>83</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, pp. 90, 91. A. I. B. is 36th Congress, 2d Session, House Reports No. 78.

<sup>84</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>85</sup> According to Capen in a letter to Buchanan, December 9, 1861, H. S. P.

must be a law for it, and referred him to Floyd. Benjamin then asked about the authority. Floyd said it was an old custom. Benjamin advised him to issue no more, due to risk to the supplies from Indian attacks or other causes. Floyd consented, but later did issue more. Benjamin advised him in the fall of 1860. The first issue had been in 1858. Buchanan said a Senator other than Benjamin told him that drafts on the War Department were on the New York Exchange. Buchanan questioned Floyd, who said there were only three or four of them. Having ascertained that no positive law provided for such an act, Buchanan told him not to issue any more. Later Floyd did deem an issue necessary, and did it without any further advice on the subject.<sup>86</sup>

The Committee that investigated the matter found no criminal intent.<sup>87</sup> An indictment was issued against Floyd for "conspiracy to defraud" the Government. He came back from his home in Virginia to Washington (March, 1861), gave bail, and asked for trial. His counsel, Carlisle, told him his testimony on the committee was sufficient, and to save money had the indictment squashed by an agreed statement of facts. Carlisle invoked an act of Congress, which provided that a witness before Congress should not be held in any court for such acts concerning which he had testified.<sup>88</sup>

This disclosure came at a very unfortunate time. The Cabinet was struck with consternation. A session was called and lasted until the small hours of the morning.<sup>89</sup> Thompson returned from

<sup>86</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 355. Buchanan to Capen, January 24, 1864.

Buchanan here also said he did not tell any agent from Boston that Floyd's practice was valid.

Buchanan had stated this fact in a letter to Black, answering the question as to whether he wanted to make a public statement regarding some of Floyd's statements pertaining to his issuing the notes.

"In regards to Mr. Floyd's statements, I do not intend to say anything for the present. Soon after I first heard of his acceptances of drafts payable on a certain day, I had a conversation with him on the subject from which I felt confident he would never accept any more and I rested satisfied. About his conditional acceptances I never knew anything. My impression is that he is still a poor man but on this I may be mistaken."—March 18, 1861, Black Papers, L. C.

<sup>87</sup> 36th Congress, 2d session, House Reports No. 78.

<sup>88</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, p. 94.

<sup>89</sup> 36th Congress, 2d Session, House Reports, p. 68.

North Carolina and went into action. There was no indication that any one thought Floyd guilty of willful embezzlement.

"The suspicion in the minds of the members of the cabinet was, that the man who communicated these facts was one of a band of conspirators who were concerned in a scheme for the plunder of the fund."<sup>90</sup>

Of these, Floyd was held to be the victim. It was viewed as a bad example of mismanagement.

The press went wild over the news. Cries for impeachment came from such papers as the *Times* and even the *Herald* hesitated. Popular ideas were afloat that the government was being looted by potential rebels. Black seems to have thought Floyd the worst bungler the government had ever encountered.<sup>91</sup> Floyd had disobeyed his instructions, but that probably was not the main point in this case. Buchanan had to have Secretaries who could be depended upon to give no cause of public complaint of such a nature. Political necessity demanded that he find a new man. Immediate action was urged by Black, and the President was not completely convinced of Floyd's good motives, although inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt. Black, who was at this time Secretary of State, later held the issue legal.

Convinced that he must avoid future embarrassments, Buchanan determined to have Floyd leave the cabinet and put in some one who would be more accurate, and also satisfactory to Northern public opinion. The situation was becoming more and more uncomfortable for Southern men in the Cabinet. They could have seen that in a last resort Buchanan's support must come from the conservative part of the Northern people. Besides a voluntary resignation lessened chances of impeachment. No doubt Buchanan thought he did Floyd a favor when he desired him to leave voluntarily.

The President asked Black to notify Floyd that he wished him to resign, but Black refused. Buchanan then said he would find some one. The one finally found was Breckenridge, a kinsman. Breckenridge notified Floyd, and afterwards told the President

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>91</sup> Black to Buckalew, partly printed in *Tyler's Quarterly*, April, 1923, dated January 28, 1861, in "Black Papers," L. C.

that Floyd was surprised, but said he would resign.<sup>92</sup> Floyd evidently did not mention this fact to his family, however.<sup>93</sup>

Buchanan had given an explanation of his policy to the South Carolina Delegation, December 10. It so happened that shortly after some Commissioners from South Carolina came to Washington that Anderson moved. Thus the two events were brought together.<sup>94</sup>

Unforeseen events were now at hand which were destined to provide Floyd a more dignified reason for leaving Federal Service. Anderson suddenly left Moultrie for Sumter. Buchanan had determined not to disturb the status quo but to act if attacked. Floyd's instructions of December 1, 1860<sup>95</sup> show that he was not plotting to surrender without a fight. He had also made it known to Trescot and others that he would resign before he would consent to reinforcements as he was opposed to a bullying policy.

On December 10th Anderson received oral orders<sup>96</sup> through General Buell to fortify one fort or the other if attacked, and to defend himself to the last extremity. He was authorized to shut himself in one or the other of the forts if he had tangible evidence of a coming assault. At the same time he was warned that no collision was desired, and only to use the above orders if attacked by the populace in case they obtained the upper hand over State authority. Buchanan, when he asked for and read

<sup>92</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 215.

<sup>93</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, p. 87.

Some of Floyd's connections claim Buchanan did not request Floyd's resignation.

It is certain, in my opinion. Crawford shows that Black told him of Buchanan's request. Buchanan made this statement that he had requested Floyd's resignation before Floyd's death in a letter in reply to General Scott. *National Intelligencer*, November 1, 1862.

<sup>94</sup> Buchanan, p. 187.

<sup>95</sup> "It is believed from information thought to be reliable that an attack will not be made on your command and the Secretary has only to refer to his conversation with you and to caution you that should his convictions unhappily prove untrue, your action must be such as to be free from the charge of initiating a collision. If attacked, you are of course expected to defend the trust committed to you to the best of your ability." War Department to Anderson, "Anderson Papers," L. C., Washington, December 1, 1860.

<sup>96</sup> See whole note, Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 73.



Buell's letter on the 21st, decided it would be folly to expect Anderson to lose all his men for a mere point of military glory. To avoid such useless slaughter, he ordered Anderson, if attacked by a greatly overwhelming force, to get the best terms he could.<sup>97</sup> An attack would have set the North aflame for war without the need of killing all his men. When the fort was attacked, only one man was killed and that by accident. The battle was more like a test case.

Although Anderson had acted without any further orders on the part of the President, and without compliance with orders as Floyd understood them, the Administration did not decide to restore Anderson. Floyd, whose resignation had been pending six days, now had what he considered a good and valid reason to resign in any event, and did so. Had there never been any acceptances, Floyd would have resigned at this point due to his views against coercion.

At a meeting of the President and some Senators,<sup>98</sup> he issued a statement to the President telling him he was pledged to maintain the status quo. Later he came unasked (on the 27th) to the Cabinet, and read a protest in an excited manner. The President desired to make a sharp written reply, but some of the Cabinet persuaded him not to take up the issue. Floyd heard of it, and in his resignation written the 27th and sent the 29th, politely dis-claimed any discourteous intent.<sup>99</sup> Buchanan had on the 25th written him a friendly note, inclosing the Pittsburgh dispatch. Buchanan accepted the resignation at the time, but he did not write his official acceptance until December 31st.<sup>100</sup> This terminated the career of Floyd as Secretary of War—a career which had brought much misfortune on himself and the Administration. It is my opinion that Floyd, while always defending himself, at the same time saw it was impossible for the President to retain him, and appreciated the fact that the President delayed until the

<sup>97</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," pp. 73-75; also in "Anderson Papers," L. C. Floyd to Anderson, December 21, 1860.

<sup>98</sup> A. H. R., April, 1908, p. 544; *Tyler's Quarterly*. Black's Works, p. 13.

<sup>99</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 410.

<sup>100</sup> *Tyler's Quarterly*, October, 1923, p. 88.



Sumter crisis gave him his opportunity. In such a case Floyd was bound to resign, as he was openly opposed to, and held himself pledged against, any change in the harbor.

The question now remains as to what Floyd in all these escapades was really aiming at. Gorham, in his "Life of Stanton," tries to show Floyd guilty of great duplicity merely because he was willing to get some muskets for the South. That act as has been shown was not unusual. Anybody could buy them. Floyd's action throughout was merely defensive. Pollard's extracts from a diary discovered after Floyd's death show a significant sentence some days after Gorham says Floyd joined the Secessionists:

My own conservatism seems in these discussions to be unusual and almost misplaced.<sup>101</sup>

Alexander, in his "Military Memoirs of a Confederate," states that one of the things which annoyed the South (probably in the fall of 1860) was that Floyd, who was known to be against Secession, was on a tour of fort inspection.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Pollard, "Lee and His Lieutenants," p. 794.

Pollard, because of his intense hatred of both Buchanan and Jefferson Davis, is not to be trusted in respect to his opinion of them. He knew and admired Floyd. The portion of the diary is no doubt genuine as it corresponds to other remarks of Floyd's at that time and with other Cabinet accounts.

<sup>102</sup> Pollard, unlike Floyd, was a warm Secessionist.

The following was from Buchanan's manuscript of his book but was omitted upon the advice of his friend Mr. Kennedy of the Interior Department:

The first paragraph declared that Floyd's instructions denied the existence of a pledge and that the Fort Sumter incident gave him a chance to be welcomed by the Secessionists.

"It cannot be denied that Secretary Floyd was naturally a man of noble impulses and a generous heart. As a man of business he was both careless and reckless and would go much too far to oblige his friends' favorites. The President often had occasion to correct his decisions. Still it is extremely doubtful whether he ever profited by the Russell frauds. It is certain that he retired from office a poor man. [Still these had involved him in what he supposed to be a fatal necessity of acting a part in opposition to his better nature.]"

Part of Buchanan's criticism was due to the fact that some of his friends

But even better proof exists. Floyd wrote a public letter published in the *Richmond Enquirer* on December 6th, in which he advised against Secession and dwelt at length on its inexpediency. His position was very much like that of Alexander H. Stephens at the time. He warned the South against trusting English aid, and asked that Virginia initiate a convention of the States to heal the trouble. The policy was practically the same as that of the Administration and Northern Democrats. There was no need of Floyd's writing a letter. It cost him the support of many Southern radicals. It was a firm and manly declaration.

As to his opposition to coercion, Floyd never made any secret. But it did not follow at all that he favored the States withdrawing from the Union. Upon returning home, he remained relatively in retirement until the war broke out. He felt that a war, if it once broke out, would be long and bitter. His mind was bent on defending his State from coercion. He was one of the many men whom Republicans drove out of the Union when they tried to force border State men to invade the Southern States.

The relations of Judge Black and the President were very intimate and always interesting. In many ways he was the direct opposite of Buchanan. He was always hating or loving<sup>103</sup> some friend or idea. Ever an earnest advocate, a shield and sword for his friends, he was the terror of his foes. While he mingled caution with a vehement spirit, he was never philosophical. He preferred direct assault to intrigue, had considerable ability, but little *savior faire*. Honest, devoted, and fearless, he was never backward in championing a cause or a friend.

Buchanan had known him for many years, but not as intimately before 1857 as some few other Pennsylvanians. He valued him highly for his ability, honesty, and frankness, and owing to the fact that he was not always looking for office. Black had little experience with Southern politics before 1857. At first Buchanan had not desired to have him in his Cabinet because, in giving told him that Floyd had insulted him in his Richmond Speech of 1861. This was not at all the case, as Floyd had praised his character very highly in that address.

<sup>103</sup> Buchanan, who was more philosophical, according to Black "often thought I was unreasonable, even severe toward both the Abolitionists and Secessionists."

an instance, he told William Porter that Black was so careless in keeping appointments that it would lead to diplomatic embarrassments. The reasons for his final decision have been noted. Buchanan never had occasion to regret it.

Nevertheless, some Northern historians have greatly overestimated Black's influence in the Cabinet. This matter is enhanced by the fact that many of Black's utterances on the subject were written by Col. Frank Burr of the *Philadelphia Press*, who so arranged his articles as to give Black the chief place in the picture. He practically admits this tendency in an eulogy on Black in 1883.<sup>104</sup> Some of the old conservative Democrats were displeased with this, and Black repeatedly denied any such intention. It must be noticed, however, that he was not deficient in self-evaluation, although he was in manner unaffected. The American Bar has seldom had a greater member than Buchanan's Attorney-General. Had political spite not debarred him from the Supreme Court, his name would no doubt have been linked with the greatest of that body.

The general impression one gets is that Buchanan considered himself by far the superior in statesmanship.<sup>105</sup> Experience counted much with the President, and in his eye Black was still a "political baby" in 1860.<sup>106</sup> Of his business and administrative ability, he must have been convinced. He held his literary talent in high regard as he was always trying to persuade him to write the history of his Administration. Above all, both men loved each other as David and Jonathan. The history of their relationship during the close of the Administration is a history of differences of two friends, a fact which proves without a doubt that Buchanan was the ruling spirit of his Administration.

Thomas, perhaps the most unbiased recorder of the events in which he participated, speaks of Black as follows:<sup>107a</sup>

Judge Black could come nearer managing him [Buchanan] than any man I know but he could not always do it, by any means, neither did he take his advice at all times.

<sup>104</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 20, September 10, 1883.

<sup>105</sup> "Mr. Buchanan and I were trying to reach the same ends by different methods." *Philadelphia Press*, September 10, 1883.

<sup>106</sup> Old clipping from the *Philadelphia Press*, 1860. Meigs' note-book, L. C.; gossip on Democratic candidates for the Presidency.

<sup>107a</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 14, 1881; by Burr.

Of all the men in the cabinet in those days, Judge Black was the one who never lost his head. He was the one positive and conservative force in that cabinet. He expressed his convictions clearly and forcibly, and never seemed to lose his self-possession. Thompson also states the situation: <sup>107b</sup>

I was much perplexed those days, as almost every member of the Cabinet was. Black had a good deal of trouble. His relations with the President were peculiar. They were from the same State, and until the differences came between them on the eve of the war, they had probably never earnestly differed. After it did come they were often seriously at variance, and frequently Black would be on the verge of resignation. <sup>107c</sup>

Thompson did not know that Black actually offered his resignation to Buchanan. Speaking of Black he said:

Although he was very strongly opposed to the position taken by the southern members of the cabinet, we all admired him very much.

In answering a charge made by a close friend of Buchanan that he (Black) had put himself unduly in the foreground, Black said (to Colonel Burr):

"I never said or thought that I was the central figure of Mr. Buchanan's Administration. Mr. Buchanan was not only the central but the only figure. It is true that Mr. Buchanan was constitutionally fearless and firm even to stubbornness. He listened sometimes very patiently while he was making up his mind but when once made up he was as immovable as a rock."

Then follows an expression of Black's surprise that he consented to change his decision on the first draft to the South Carolina Commissioners:

"He had never before to my knowledge given up an opinion once formed. He was in the habit of acting upon his own convictions unmoved by the influence of anybody whomsoever they might be." <sup>108</sup>

<sup>107b</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1883.

<sup>107c</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1883, *Tennessee Advocate*.

<sup>108</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21-22, 1881.

"Of course I recollect but little besides the general tenor of the conversation. I held that what the Southern men at that time called 'allegiance' to the State was an absurdity; that the word was a feudal one and expressed the duty of a vassal to his lord. It had no proper place in our

In treating of the Secession movement, the two, as will be shown later, had their differences from the start. Black tried to erase the term "allegiance" from the political science vocabulary in America, merely retaining the term "obedience" to laws both State and Federal. This was a rather novel way of stating the divided sovereignty idea. Buchanan did not personally hold to the idea of *paramount* State allegiance,<sup>109</sup> but did believe in State Sovereignty and strict construction. He also realized that the doctrine was considered a logical deduction from State Sovereignty by many of the most distinguished men of the different sections of the Union.

Black's opinions in November, 1860, as well as those of a conservative and able Pennsylvania Democrat, are clearly and admirably set forth in the two letters following, which not only set forth the difficulties of the Administration, but sketch the rise of the anti-slavery agitation since its inception:

MY DEAR JUDGE:

I received, a week ago or more, under your frank the address of Your Son & read it with great satisfaction. It is only too highly polished. Still it lacks not pith and strength, and gives political vocabulary. 'Obedience to the laws is the duty of an American citizen.' 'Federal and State laws are of equal obligation, assuming them to be not expressly or impliedly forbidden by the Constitution. . . . To all this Davis had an answer. What I said did not seem to make much impression on him. . . .' *Philadelphia Press*, August 21 (or 22), 1881.

<sup>109</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 187.

One reason for Black's insistence on reenforcements to the Fort was perhaps the fact that after he became Secretary of State, he was beset by the consuls of the foreign powers at Charleston concerning the attitude of the Government towards the secession movement. The policy of ignoring the movement as a legal nullity involved some delicate points on the matters of giving clearance papers, etc. The Federal government had no officer in the port and none was confirmed by the Senate; and at the same time the President held that Congress, rather than he, had power to recognize the acts of the State officials. All through this matter the President kept strictly within the limits of his granted authority so as to give his Congressional opponents no offense.

Some undated letters in the Crawford Papers, (L. C.,) from Black state that in his private opinion he held that an individual cannot be punished when compelled to do an act by local authorities but that he could not acknowledge papers of clearance (issued by "South Carolina") officially.

promise of the paternal capacity for saying fine things in the right way. I wish that son all success. I was very much pleased with my acquaintance with him at Harrisburg and should value an opportunity to extend and cultivate it.

Thus I acknowledge your politeness in sending me the address & have given you my opinion of it as I have of every document & production you have ever sent me. *I never have been able to get even an acknowledgment from you of any opinion, speech or other thing that I have sent you.* There's the difference.

I have had no heart to write you or anybody else on politics since the election. But now as I have pen in hand let me say a few things I want to say to somebody & I don't care how faithfully you preserve what I write—nor when or how it may come up in judgment against me.

Lincoln & Seward are right. The conflict *is* irrepressible.

Lloyd Garrison, offended with some trifle in the Colonization Society about 1835, & instigated not only by the *D-I* but by some English infidels, started the scheme of abolishing the Slavery of the U. S. He drew to himself all those Boston infidels whom unitarianism had thrown up to the surface & they commenced the war on Slavery. Their weapons were sometimes gross blasphemies—sometimes literary platitudes—sometimes humanitarian philosophies—but whichever they were, they were directed against Slavery, not because they cared for blacks or whites, but because Slavery was an Institution of civilized and Christianized Society. They saw the plain evidence that the principle of human bondage had received Divine sanction. This intensified their hate of it. They knew that we as a people were not responsible for the institution, but that we had dealt wisely with it and had turned it to good account—making it the instrument of blessing to both ourselves & the Slaves. This maddened their rage. Here was a chance to war against God, Native Country, political & social Institutions—and the vultures whetted their beaks for an unusual feast.

The first body of men they captivated was the Methodist Church & then the conspiracy began to attract attention. Then the Presbyterian, Congregational, & Baptist Churches began to preach & pray & resolve about Slavery. The politicians of New England seized hold & mounted the hobby. All New England became abolitionist. New York fell the next victim, then one after another of the Western States and last of all our own good old Pennsylvania.

O what a fall was there my Countrymen,  
When You & I and all of us fell down  
Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.



Thus this foul plague has over-spread all the North & has got possession of the patronage & power of the government. Do you suppose it is going to stop now? I tell you Nay. It is irrepressible. It means to invade the South & sweep Slavery into the sea.

Consider how it has mixed itself up with Northern ideas. We are a thrifty, industrious, money getting people, and all our thrift is attributed to the abolition of slavery in these northern states.

We are a Church-going people, and anti-Slavery has become the cherished dogma of northern theology. Not only so, but personal religion has come to be measured by the zeal of slavery agitation. In almost all the Churches above mentioned abolitionism has become, practically, a test of good standing, if not of Church membership. The Episcopal & the Romish Churches alone hold on to the conditions of communion prescribed by the Saviour, and increasing hate of these Churches has marked the progress of abolitionism. Its march has been attended also with other results—such as conjugal infidelities & prostitution—breaches of trust of all sorts, legislative corruptions, fraudulent insolvencies, stuffing ballot boxes, gambling, lying, slandering, drunkenness &c &c.

We are an educating people,—and abolitionism born in hell & nursed by the new Episcopal Churches has entered into our schools, school books & school literature.

Now is it to be supposed that abolitionism so incorporated with our thrift, our religion, our education, is going to die out just as it is about to clothe itself with the patronage & power of the government? I look for no such improbable event. On the contrary I expect it to wax more fat, more aggressive, more destructive.

The democratic party has become powerless before the march of this Monster. *The party is fast becoming abolitionized.* At this moment, not only political leaders in the party here in Penn<sup>a</sup>. but men high in office by virtue of Democratic votes, are the most gratified of Lincoln's admirers. Their sympathies were with him in the contest & if their votes were cast for Douglas it was not until they were assured that they would not hinder Lincoln's success. I don't mean that all Douglas men were for Lincoln—the honest among them were deluded—but the excessively conscientious sticklers for regular nominations, those Simon pures that have always helped Simon Cameron to represent the democracy—these immaculate patriots and all wise philosophers who insisted that the democratic party should have a candidate for whom no democratic state would vote—these are the men I mean who were careful not to vote for Foster or Douglas until they had assured themselves of the success of Curtin & Lincoln. And they, these



very men, set up for future leaders of the party & what do you suppose the party will do to resist abolitionism under *their* lead?

The results of the election are not to be looked for in any legislation that shall exclude slavery from the territories or otherwise interfere with it. Legislation won't be attempted until the debauch of the public mind shall have become so general as to abolitionize both houses of Congress & the Sup. Court, for until then all attempts at legislation would be abortive. But nevertheless the conflict is to be waged with renewed vigor. An abolition party is to be built up in the South through patronage. The press, the pulpit, & the lecturer's rostrum in the North are to keep up the agitation. A raid here and there and a local insurrection now & then are to be achieved. Wells & Springs & Food are to be poisoned. An occasional duelling will be fixed & a husband & father be occasionally found with his throat cut & thus the irrepressible conflict is to go on—until one after another concludes—'well slavery is a bad thing—slavery is a sin against God & man—slavery ought to be restricted, tormented, extirpated—let's vote for the anti-slavery candidates.'

Now, my dear Sir, all this I believe & in view of it what ought a Northern man of common sense, of common honesty and who believes that slavery was intended as a special blessing to the people of the United States—what ought such a man, what ought I to think of the proposition of the Southern States to secede from the Union?

As a Northern man I would beg them to wait—to hear and to forbear a little longer. Though I consider them greatly outraged, not merely by Lincoln's election, but by the northern legislation that has already abolished the constitution & by the agitation which has destroyed the 'public tranquility' the Constitution was designed to promote, yet it is possible the fears which are too probable may not be realized. It is possible that the Good Being who has shielded us in times of danger may save us from our own folly & wickedness. It is possible that some miracle may exercise the northern mind and restore it to sanity. I would point them to the sound minority of the north—the more than 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal & who, though persecuted & cast down, will never yield an inch willingly to trenchant abolitionism but will fight it as they have fought anti-masonry, Bankism, Know-nothingism and every other fanaticism.

If such appeals will not stay secession, then let it come. There is cause. Much as I deplore it I can't deny it. We have broke the bond long since, repeatedly, ruthlessly and 'a bargain broken on one side is broken on all sides.' As a Northern man I cannot in justice condemn the South for withdrawing from the Union.

I believe they have been loyal to the Union formed by the Constitution—secession is not disloyalty to that, for that no longer exists. The North has extinguished it.

And if they do go out, don't let a blow be struck against them by the present administration. Dissuade them if you can, but if you can't let them go in peace. I wish Pennsylvania could go with them. They are our brethren. They have not annoyed us. They have benefitted & blessed us in a thousand ways. They have been good & peaceable neighbors. We are the wrong doers. We have driven them off & if we raise an arm to strike the 'stones of Rome will move to mutiny.'

Mr. Buchanan has got the most delicate duty to perform that any human being was ever called to. I hear that he insists on execution of the laws in all states that remain in Union, but that he will not resist secession. That is exactly right. Though I would have him dissuade from secession as long as moral suasion can avail, but if it can't avail, coercion is not to be thought of as a preventive.

As to Lincoln's administration, it will follow that of Buchanan, Pearce & Fillmore in this slavery question. He will never put it on that tissue of lies which is called the Chicago platform, for I hear he is not a born idiot. He knows the Government can't last an hour on that basis and for *the present* the irrepressible is not to be waged in that form. Public opinion rather is to be debauched more & more as Seward told you.

But I stop. Why I have written you I scarcely know except that I wanted to pour out my heart into some ear & thought possibly I might suggest something worthy of your consideration in this hour of peril.

I am half inclined to think however that I should unsay what I began by saying & should ask you not to preserve this letter but to burn it after reading it twice.

Of course I should be greatly gratified to hear from you and am

Yours truly,

GEO. W. WOODWARD <sup>110</sup>

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

MY DEAR SIR:

When I received your admirable letter, I intended to take the first moment that I could steal either from rest or my labor, to give it an answer—not such an answer as it deserved, for that was beyond my capacity, but an answer which at least would be

<sup>110</sup> Black Papers, L. C., Vol. XXXIII, Woodward to Black, November 18, 1860.

full and frank on all the subjects to which it refers. The moment of leisure has not come even yet. But if it had, I suppose my purpose would hardly hold, for events, so many of them and some so unexpected, have occurred in the meantime, that to discuss their bearing upon the general subject would require very considerable reflection.

We are probably in the midst of a revolution, bloodless as yet. The cotton states have sedately, calmly and deliberately determined that no power which they can resist shall retain them in the Union beyond the 4th of March; they will not have Abe Lincoln to rule over them. It is not worth while to talk about theories, for whether secession be revolution or the exercise of a constitutional right, it comes to the same thing in the end. This great country is to be dismembered. The Constitution that Washington gave his approbation to is to be broken up and destroyed. I see the beginning but not the end. The probabilities are strongly in favor of the opinion that all the southern States will secede sooner or later. If Congress authorizes and the President attempts to carry out a system of coercion or subjugation they will all be in a blaze instantly. On the contrary if no force is used, and the cotton-states can show the others the road to independence and freedom from abolition rule without fighting their way, every slave state will regard the question as one of free choice to be governed by their sympathies. In that event, the choice, of course, will be made before long, and then where are we? Can we in Pennsylvania live at peace with those intolerable mischief-makers in New England who do mischief like monkeys for the mere sake of mischief? We have no slaves to interfere with, it is true; but they have organized a war against the institution of marriage which at this moment is as strong as the abolition societies were twenty years ago, and they have just as good a right to force free-love upon Pennsylvania as free-labor upon Virginia. I am inclined to think also that you and I would take any interference with our matrimonial relations about as hard as the southern people take northern intervention between them and their servants.

I think, however, that you overstate somewhat the power and the depth of the mere bigotry, superstition and fanaticism at the bottom of the late northern movements. I do not believe that the real anti-slavery feeling, the actual desire & determination to abolish slavery, is as extensive as your view makes it seem. The corruptions which you speak of, the total disregard of moral principle by politicians, are to a greater extent the *cause* of the anti-slavery vote, and that vote to a greater extent the *effect* of them than you suppose. You may remember that in one of my

imprudent letters written to you about two years ago, I told you in substance, that I regarded a certain infamous transaction in Pennsylvania as likely to bring about this very state of things. How could we expect a set of politicians thus prostituted to hear or to understand what was necessary to be done to save the country? How can it be possible that they care whether the country is saved or not? Prostrate and fallen as they were, how could they rise to the height of that great argument, which was before them on the 7. of November. No, sir, those who conscientiously and really put the abolition of slavery before the peace of the country and the harmony of the states are restricted to a few hardened, wicked ribald infidels combined with a few others, religious, to be sure, but blinded and brutalized by bigotry. The worst trouble is that we now seem to have a majority in the northern states, of men who are perfectly willing to take advantage of any prejudice whether they approve it or not, which will give them votes enough to carry them into power. It must be perfectly well known to you that in 1856 there was a serious debate among them, (it was scarcely settled indeed at the time of the election) whether their rallying principle should be opposition to the Catholic religion or opposition to the slave-holders. It is as sure as death that in 1860 they would have gone to burning churches & convents, and smelling about female schools with just as much zest as they attack slavery in the southern states, if thereby they could have been equally certain of success. If the abuses of marital power and the wrongs of women should in 1864 become the basis of a party organization strong enough to hold the balance of power in the Union, how many of our anti-slavery patriots do you suppose would have virtue enough to resist the temptation of joining them, especially if a few married men would suffer their indignation to boil over and say or do some violent things such as southern men have occasionally done under the influence of excitement produced by the abolitionists? But enough of this. The fact is, and we cannot change it, that though fanaticism alone or corruption alone would have been impotent, they are now united and present to us a front more terrible than an army with banners.

If the southern states could be induced to hold back, to make a fair effort, & the Democracy of the Northern states could be reorganized & expurgated, and the conscience of the masses fairly appealed to, I am satisfied that all would be well. But I fear there is no chance for either. The news from the southern states, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi & Florida grows worse and worse. Virginia is preparing to perform the duties of an arbitrator, but it does not seem probable that she will be listened to.

Mr. Buchanan has, as you truly say, the most delicate and difficult duty to perform that ever was assigned to a human being, and when it shall be performed, no portion of this people will say, "God bless you." A few scattered and bold hearts here and there will dare to do him justice. But in the North, his life's life has been already lied away, and the South will adhere to him only so long as he expresses no opinion against the constitutional right of secession, and no determination to abandon his sworn duty of seeing the laws faithfully executed. There is but one thing left for him, and that is the approbation of his own conscience. For myself I value as highly as anybody the recollection that I once seemed to have some portion of the public confidence at home. But it will give me far more pride for the balance of my life to remember that I risked and lost it in a faithful support of principles which sooner or later will be acknowledged as necessary for the preservation of the noblest political system that the world ever saw.

I said your letter was admirable. That is not merely my own opinion. I took the liberty of reading it confidentially to several of my friends. Cobb said he would give a hundred dollars for a copy of it. Gen. Cass said that it made him feel gladder than ever for his vote in the Senate on your nomination. To these two I read it separately, and afterwards to the President and all the members of the Cabinet together. It excited universal admiration and approbation for its eloquence & its truth. The slight criticism that I have made upon it in this reply was not expressed by anybody else. They wanted to publish it very much. I am not sure that I would advise its publication in its present form. But can you not embody the same ideas in a shape which will enable me to lay it before the world? Think of this and write me again as soon as convenient.

I am, very respectfully &

Truly yours &c

J. S. BLACK.<sup>111</sup>

JUDGE GEO. W. WOODWARD  
Philad<sup>a</sup>. Pa.

From the beginning, upon the question of re-enforcing Fort Sumter, the President and Black differed on the solution of the problem. To the other members of the Cabinet he appeared to be meddlesome. The President told him in a polite way that such matters were primarily the concern of the War Depart-

<sup>111</sup> Black Papers, Vol. XXXIII, Black to Woodward, November 24, 1860.

ment.<sup>112</sup> Congress was inactive and troops were few.<sup>113</sup> These arguments were enough even had the President not put his faith in a different method of procedure. While Black's ideas have been applauded by certain Northern historians, it would seem that there was much to be said against them.

As time went on his impatience grew to a great degree and was fanned by the arrival of Stanton in the Cabinet, in the last of December. The arrival of the South Carolina Commissioners, and their demand that Anderson be restored to Moultrie, aroused his impatience still more. When the President did not even ask his opinion on his reply to the South Carolina Commissioners, Black spoke out vigorously (see Stanton), but to no effect. He was now ready to resign, but could hardly bring himself to break with Buchanan in his hour of peril. A passage from one of the numerous accounts read as follows:

On Sunday morning the 30th, Judge Black drove to Mr. Toucey and informed that gentleman that if the President's decision was not changed he would be compelled to resign. A half an hour afterwards he repeated his determination to Mr. Stanton who said they would go or stay together. Then Mr. Toucey carried the news to the White House, and the consultation of Messrs. Black and Stanton was interrupted by a message earnestly summoning the former to meet the President. "I know," continued Judge Black, "the sort of appeal he will make to me, in the name of our sacred and long standing friendship. To resist will be the most painful duty of my life." But Mr. Stanton thought it was no time for magnanimity and he exhorted him to be firm against all persuasions.<sup>114</sup>

Judge Black was not mistaken. Mr. Toucey, the President said, had brought the worst news he had heard yet, and bad news was sadly frequent.

It will be remembered that this was the third great calamity which had befallen Buchanan in about ten days, namely; the rumors of Floyd's default; the unexpected move of Anderson; and now the resignation of his premier, not to count that of Cass.

<sup>112</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 7, 1881. This article gives some excellent facts, but shows an attempt of the writer to put Black in the spot-light.

<sup>113</sup> Moore, Vol. X, pp. 282, 283.

<sup>114</sup> Black Papers, L. C.



He had thought that Judge Black at least would not desert him in this bitter hour. If he had left him in the day of his power and prosperity it might have been different but at this, the darkest moment of trial and adversity, his friends were few, and sorely needed. Almost, but not quite overcome, Judge Black responded that he longed to stand by the President and defend him to the end.

"There is," said he, "no storm of popular indignation I would not breast by your side, no depth of misfortune into which I would not descend provided you had a course to defend. But answer to the Commissioners leaves you no cause, it sweeps the ground from under our feet, it places you where no man can stand with you, and where you cannot stand alone."

Mr. Buchanan was deeply moved, but not more so than Judge Black.<sup>114a</sup>

He responded by placing the answer in the hands of the Secretary with permission to make it what he pleased, but with the injunction to return it by six o'clock that evening. There was no time to be lost. Judge Black hastened to the Attorney-General's office, where he wrote the following paper, and Mr. Stanton copied it as rapidly as the sheets were thrown to him.

Curtis, who relied upon information from the Black articles and addresses, termed this matter a "Cabinet Crisis." It was more properly speaking "Black's Crisis." Like most of the others, his nerves were on edge, and the incident appeared larger to him than to Buchanan or some of the other members of the Cabinet. Only Stanton, Toucey, and himself seemed to have known anything of it at the time. Holt, writing of the matter in 1884, said: <sup>115a</sup>

His highly impulsive temperament and the extreme solicitude under which we were acting may have led him to say as much, but if so, it was unknown to me at the time. Certainly no such avowal was made to myself, nor did I make any such to him or

<sup>114a</sup> In a later notice of this event Buchanan's position will be set forth more fully.

<sup>115</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 86.

<sup>115a</sup> Cf. with Thomas' remark above.

The conclusion is that one may be impulsive and still know what he wants.



other, and of this he has left record evidence. In a letter from him to Mr. Schell under date of 6th of August 1863 he said "neither Stanton nor Mr. Holt ever spoke to the President about resigning upon any contingency whatever, before the incoming of the new Administration."

The result of this burst of "highly impulsive" temperament has been the relative distortion of an historical incident. (Buchanan's reasons for the first note will be given later.)

The incidents of the Sumter and Commissioners question had a marked effect on Black's psychology. He speedily became as bitter to the South as he was to the Republicans.

On January the 28th he wrote a long letter to Buckalew, United States Minister to Ecuador (a native of Pennsylvania and a personal friend), finding fault with the South, Buchanan's policy, the Republicans, and everything in general.<sup>116</sup> On the 17th he wrote a letter of similar nature to A. V. Parsons.<sup>117</sup> He was evidently much put out about Anderson's truce, although he did not say so. On the 22d of January he addressed a letter to Buchanan as he could not attend the Cabinet because he was laid up with rheumatism. In this communication he made some caustic remarks on some of Toucey's acts, but paid tribute to his character. Toucey had authorities who told him the *Brooklyn* could not clear the bar at Charleston while some persons told Black they thought it could. Speaking of Buchanan's policy, he remarked:<sup>118</sup>

Your credulity seemed then to be founded upon certain assurances of certain outside persons in whom you confided that nothing of the kind was in contemplation.

He added that he thought the Administration had been deceived by the South. Continuing, he said:

The short official race which yet remains to us must be run before a cloud of witnesses, and to win we must cast aside every weight and the sin of statecraft which doth so easily beset us, and

<sup>116</sup> Black to Buchalew, January 28, 1861, Black Papers, L. C. Parts have been quoted in this study.

<sup>117</sup> Black Papers, L. C.

<sup>118</sup> Black to Buchanan, January 22, 1861; Black Papers.

look simply upon our duty and the performance of it as the only prize of high calling.

Thus combining vigorous exhortation with courtesy and cleverness, he betrayed the fact that others have tried to deny, namely that the President had to be handled with care. Remembering the fact that Buchanan had been in national politics some thirty years longer than his Secretary, the conclusion was not out of place.

I am free to admit that in this hasty note I may have been mistaken. I do not claim to be more zealous in the public service nor more patriotic than my neighbors; certainly not wiser than my colleagues. To your better judgment I defer implicitly. But my absence from the council today annoyed me supposing as I did that some of the matters here referred to might be discussed in it. . . .<sup>119</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Black to Buchanan, January 22, 1861, Black Papers, L. C.

Health Matters: Certain persons, including King, have tried to convey the impression that Buchanan was much enfeebled by the cares of his office. Before commenting upon this further see the following passages written by a daughter of Judge Black, who was with him at the time in Washington. Black was a man in the prime of life, brave, vigorous, aggressive. Buchanan was 70 years old in April, 1861.

"The anxieties of the time told on Judge Black. His picture taken just after he left the Cabinet shows a care-worn sad and thin face, not recognizable by those who knew him in his later years of prosperity and happiness. He left Washington full of mourning for the state of the country and very poor in pocket."—Mary Black Clayton, "Reminiscences of Jeremiah Sullivan Black," p. 115.

In another place (p. 112) she again alludes to the subject:

"Those who were beside Judge Black at that time, and suffered with him, can never forget those anxious days and sleepless nights,"

and adds that in 1859 he was "worn out from work and tobacco." He was laid in with rheumatism in the latter part of January for a short time. Holt lost his wife in 1860. He was also reported as recovering from an attack of pneumonia in the winter of the same year.

One of the humorous attempts to give the idea that Buchanan was feeble is the mention of his wearing a dressing gown (or wrapper). Mr. Pierce, however, had a very beautiful one which he wore while President (Maunsell B. Field, "Memories of Many Men"). Better still, the Lancaster Correspondent of the *Herald* in 1856, (June 28), describes an occasion where Buchanan wore such a gown. A Douglas paper in a caricature of the President in 1860 before the election describes him:

Black's influence on writing Buchanan history has been fortunate and unfortunate. In summing up the matter, he told Buchanan he thought he was at first too lenient to the South and later too much so to the Republicans. Buchanan promptly defended his policy, and on one occasion in a vigorous style:

I am not at all astonished to learn that your views and mine are so far out of accord, & that in my administration I first conceded too much to the South & afterwards too much to the present administration. My policy was well matured . . . (in his December and January messages). . . . From there I never consciously swerved. . . . Our opinions may be at variance but I should be truly sorry to present ourselves in opposition to each other in regard to matters of fact.

Black long outlived Buchanan, reaping riches and legal victories. He was one of the most prominent men of his times.

"Up to his elbows in papers and up to his neck in political mischief—sits the Old Public Functionary! He is arrayed in a long dressing-gown and slippers, holds an unlighted cigar in his mouth and has a peculiar nervous twitching always to the left as if some unseen spirits were plucking him on that side by the sleeve and whispering distasteful counsel. . . ."

No one thought he ever needed any rest in that dismal winter. From morn to night he was interviewed and harried. Small wonder the President looked worn and haggard (Mrs. Pryor, "Reminiscences of Peace and War," p. 110); yet he kept everlastingly at work. Even when he was not well enough to go to his office he held Cabinet conferences in his library. (King, "Turning on the Light," p. 30.) During all this time he did clerical work that would have exhausted a younger man. He read an almost unlimited number of letters, and filed them when answered. Midst the cares of government, the President even managed to attend at a wedding (on December 20th, Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan," Vol. II, pp. 488, 489). Upon the slightest remission of business, his constitution always began recuperating. At first he enjoyed good health after his return home (Moore, "Buchanan's Works," Vol. XI, p. 181), but in May, 1861, he suffered from a severe attack of rheumatism (Moore, "Buchanan's Works," Vol. XI, pp. 190, 191). His excellent health enabled Buchanan to live eight years after his term, when he died at the advanced age of seventy-seven.

When one takes all things into account, Buchanan stood the test wonderfully well. His vitality was marvelous. Polk died soon after his term,—worn out. Harrison died in office. Pierce had to go abroad for a rest, Buchanan courteously putting a government vessel at his disposal for part of the trip. Wilson suffered a stroke, and Harding died of overwork. Many of these men had far less to endure than Buchanan. The wonder is that he stood the strain with no lightening of his official duties.

Scorning Republican offers to favor, he remained a Democrat to the last, and from time to time bore eloquent and accurate testimony as to the character and ability of his chief.

On the other hand, his repetition of his variance with Buchanan is not to be too well taken. The solution will always be a matter of doubt, and Buchanan had plenty of support from Democrats both North and South in his policy of delay. Republican writers of the Reconstruction period flattered Black's ideas in order to shift responsibility from themselves. As their writers now tend to assume cheerfully the credit for making the Civil War, that tendency is passing. At any rate, the shades of Buchanan and Black can delight themselves in the never-ending satisfaction of an eternal friendship.

The most attractive member of Buchanan's Cabinet was Jacob Thompson.

A review of his relations with the President is of interest as a character study, and also because it throws much light on the period. His unpopularity in the North was due to the fact that it fell to his lot to be the agent of the Confederate Government in Canada during the war. In that capacity <sup>119a</sup> it was his duty to try and co-operate with those in the North opposed to the continuation of the war.

Thompson was a man who has never received due notice. A most pleasing personality, he had a very cool head, and could play a difficult rôle with little friction. Winning, able, persuasive in argument, affectionate, and warm hearted, he melted opposition rather than destroyed it. The deep mutual regard between Secretary and President is very apparent in the correspondence which forms a vivid and very full narrative of their relations in the critical days of the period.

The information given by him, with some allowance for claiming a somewhat larger sphere than he may have occupied, is lucid and valuable. A general summary of his attitude is given in a

<sup>119a</sup> For a brief account of Thompson's activities in Canada, and a refutation of the base charges made against him by Holt and others that he had something to do with the assassination of Lincoln, his personal friend, see J. F. Bivins, "Life of Jacob Thompson," in *Historical Papers of Trinity College*, Durham, N. C., 1898, pp. 88-91.

letter to Samuel Crawford, and serves as a correction in some parts of Trescot's Narrative.

MEMPHIS, TENN.,  
Feb. 29th, 1884.

GEN. S. W. CRAWFORD.

DEAR SIR:

I have been delayed in making my reply to your very courteous questions by the company which has been at my house ever since the receipt of your letter.

In the first paragraph where you state my position to the President, you state it correctly, and although I have added a few additional words, I leave it with you to adopt these words or leave them out as you may prefer.

When you come to the orders to Gen. Anderson, I took little or no part in them. When the S. C. Commissioners came to Washington I did not go to see them. I did not allow myself to be complicated with the matter or question at all. I felt that if we could manage to keep the peace, Congress could have ample opportunity to compose our difficulties, and if Congress failed, the Peace Congress could come to some agreement and save the country. This was the hope of the President, and I determined to stand by him as long as I could and therefore it was impossible for me to have said to Gov. Floyd that if he left the Cabinet I would follow him on any contingency whatever. I am sure I never threatened to leave the Cabinet except upon the occurrence of a conflict of Arms or the secession of my State. I hope therefore you will correct this statement.

I know Judge Black took the liveliest interest in the question of reinforcing the Charleston Forts—as the question did not in any way come up in my Department I paid but little attention to it except to express apprehensions that an effort to strengthen them the first would lead to conflict and I considered that would be disastrous. Until the removal of Gen. Anderson from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumpter, my attention was never called to the orders. Then I heard the history of those orders first from Judge Black and afterwards in the Cabinet I am satisfied however that Judge Black suggested and caused to be adopted the phrase that Gen. Anderson was to have the authority to judge of the evidence of an intention to attack him and then to strengthen himself as he thought best.

I have answered you with all frankness and as my duties as Secretary of Interior called my attention to the other matter I took but little interest in the order issued to the Army. I did

not believe the constitution conferred any power on Congress to wage war upon a state or to use force upon a state. And therefore I acted throughout to avoid if possible any conflict of arms. This was the principle on which I acted from beginning to the end.

With sincere Respect  
Yours truly  
J. THOMPSON.

At another time he further described his attitude: <sup>120</sup>

My own position was made plain to the President very early in the action. I told him if it were possible I would like to remain with him until the close of his administration, but if Mississippi seceded I must go out too. I went to Mississippi when a young man, and anything I am she made me. There I had a handsome property. My family, my relatives, and my friends were in Mississippi. If I remained with the Union I would be denounced as a traitor to my state. If I resigned when my state seceded I would be called a traitor to my country. All this I laid before the President and asked which horn of the dilemma I should take. His reply was: "When your state secedes, I will not insist upon your remaining."

Buchanan accepted the situation as unevitable although later he thought Thompson made a mistake.<sup>121</sup> Thompson's position was not unlike that of Lee. A second account of the approach to the President upon Cass' resignation shows the President as determined to keep him out of the Cabinet as Curtis has stated.

I can tell you something, however, about the resignation of Cass which may be of interest. The day after sending in his resignation, he came to me and said he had a request to make. He wanted me to go to the President and ask for the return of his letter. It was a delicate task, but I accepted it. The very moment I broached the subject to the President I knew I had undertaken a bootless errand. He heard my request in silence and seemed perfectly indifferent. After a while I arose to go and hinted at the object of my visit, but the President was not inclined to understand and I left without the letter. I told Cass frankly how matters stood, and he said he supposed he would let it go and say no more.

<sup>120</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 17, 1883.

<sup>121</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 221.



Because of an inference made by Clingman that Buchanan secretly approved that Thompson should attend a convention in North Carolina in December, 1860, Thompson gave a detailed account of the whole subject, which is here reproduced.

When asked: "What was the President's action in relation to South Carolina when it seceded?"<sup>122</sup>

Thompson replied:

I claimed that Mr. Buchanan planted himself upon the Constitution in his treatment of the whole Southern question. He held that a State had no right to secede, and that the Government had no right to use force against it—a sort of astride the fence that would bring the dissatisfied state into that sort of relation to the general government that an adjustment of the differences between the two must of necessity be peacefully made. This was his idea in the arrangement with South Carolina. She was not to commit any hostile acts, and he was not to menace its people by reinforcing the Southern forts. In other words they both agreed that everything should stand in status quo so long as his Presidential term remained continued.

Some time in the month of December, 1860 while I was Secretary of the Interior, the government of Mississippi sent me a letter requesting me to act as commissioner of that state to the State of North Carolina, and urge it to co-operate with Mississippi in measures for the protection and maintenance of Southern rights. This appointment was unexpected and took me by surprise. I was known as a co-operationist, and was opposed to separate State action. I believed all the Southern States should have a perfect understanding with each other, and when the time came for movement—if movement must be made—they should act together and act simultaneously. At that time Mr. Buchanan had sent to Congress his very able message in which he had denounced secession as heresey, unconstitutional and unauthorized. I differed from this message in this: That while I admitted the constitution did not provide the remedy for the States, yet each had retained this right, from which they had never parted, to withdraw for cause the powers they had conferred upon the general government and resume the full exercise of them. But as I held, no man could justify secession which was not sufficient to justify revolution, and as there was not and could not be during the administration of Mr. Buchanan any justifying cause of secession, and as our difference was a mere abstract one I could with pro-

<sup>122</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, March 4, 1884.



priety hold my place in the cabinet. When the governor's letter was received and I had determined it was my duty to accept the appointment, I sought and obtained an interview with the President and told him I wished a leave of absence to visit the Legislature of North Carolina. At first he endeavored to dissuade me from going, but as I persisted he insisted upon knowing what I proposed to do. I unbosomed myself to him with the utmost frankness. I told him that an exciting canvas was going on in Mississippi in the subject of secession—that I was opposed to any hasty and hurried action on the part of the state, but that he knew that my conviction was that I owed my primary allegiance to my state; and whatever destiny she chose must necessarily be my destiny; as, yet there was no existing cause that would justify secession; there would be none during his administration, and if the states of the South could and would co-operate and appoint a future day for a united convention, and this was known to the whole country, and we could avoid a conflict of arms and bloodshed, Congress which was then in session, could and probably would in the meantime provide some compromise which would remove from the Southern mind any apprehension of an invasion of their rights from the North. I could hurry up North Carolina, she thereby would acquire an influence to hold back Mississippi and the gulf states. To this end I would visit the state. All the influence possible should be exerted to induce the states to have a full and candid understanding of the rights of the Southern men in their slave property. Unless that was reached I foresaw that the disruption of the Union was inevitable. If the President preferred I would at once resign, or hold my place, just as he desired. To this he frankly replied that while he feared I would be the subject of misconstruction yet he could not say he wished me to resign. And with that leave I went to North Carolina and I am confident I had but one interview with the President on the subject of leave of absence and therefore I could not have delivered to the President the weighty opinions and "all he said" of Mr. Clingman. And without this second conversation, all the evidence of Mr. Clingman is mere sounding brass.<sup>123</sup>

I cannot close this letter without bearing testimony to the greatness, goodness, and worth of our departed chieftain. It was his fortune to live amid dissolving empires. But a purer man, a more sincere friend, a more devoted patriot, an honest citizen, and truer guardian of the public interests never lived or wielded power.

<sup>123</sup> Both accounts were published with a letter of Harriet Lane dated September 29, 1877, in the *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*. Clipping in Buchanan's Papers, H. S. P.

A statement<sup>124</sup> by Thompson's chief clerk made in the House during the war confirms the above testimony. He stated that Thompson was much opposed to war, and earnestly desired to see tranquillity restored. He felt that perhaps some one desired to embarrass him by appointing him to the North Carolina convocation.

The excitement over the abstraction of the Indian Bonds led some persons to suspect Thompson, who, like Floyd, had nothing to do with the matter. Black alluded to the accusation as follows:<sup>125</sup>

Having mentioned the name of Mr. Thompson, I ought to say that the most infamous slander ever uttered against any public man in this country was the charge against him of abstracting bonds belonging to the Indian Trust Fund. He was and is a man of unspotted integrity; a committee of his enemies declared that in this transaction he was entirely faultless, and yet the accusation is continually repeated for the gratification of mere political malice.

Thompson's part in advising Buchanan in the preparation of his message of December 1860 and January 1861 will be given later. Upon reading Black's account of his reluctant intention to leave the Cabinet in December, Thompson said:<sup>126</sup>

I had no idea he would make it at the time he did, although he made a remark to me a day or two before that I remembered at once when I heard of his action. We were walking along a corridor of the White House together, and as we reached the President's door Black said to me: "Thompson, I can't see how we are to hold together. I think there must soon be a general breaking up." He said no more, and we separated—he to visit the President, I to go home.

His ignorance of this event later led him, as has been mentioned, to attribute Buchanan's attitude to the arrival of Stanton.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> House Reports, 37th Congress, 3d Session No. 19. Kennedy also refuted Clingman in a letter dated October 10, 1877, to the *Baltimore Sun*. Clipping in Buchanan Papers, H. S. P.

<sup>125</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881, by Burr.

<sup>126</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 17, 1884.

<sup>127</sup> A. H. R., 1911, Vol. II, p. 532.

The sending of the *Star of the West* brought about Thompson's resignation. He wrote Cobb that Buchanan and Holt had played the "meanest trick"<sup>128</sup> on him by sending a secret expedition to relieve Sumter and keeping him in the dark so that the news might not reach Charleston. Nevertheless, his affection for Buchanan did not cease, nor his regard for him abate as is shown in his letter of resignation, and a farewell letter that does credit to both of them.<sup>129</sup>

A feud, which seems to have been smoldering, burst forth at this time between Thompson and Holt over a telegram that Thompson wrote his friend Longstreet in South Carolina, who was trying to restrain the radicals. This feud lasted for over twenty years. It was later intensified over the claim of Thompson that Holt had paid witnesses to testify that he had had something to do with the assassination of Lincoln in order that Thompson could be executed.<sup>130</sup> This accusation was a base falsehood on the part of Holt. Thompson liked Lincoln personally, and would never have thought of such a thing.<sup>130a</sup>

Thompson's account of the reason why Holt remained with the Union, although probably somewhat exaggerated, is an interesting contribution to the economic interpretation of History.

Holt's reason for being a Union man I can easily give you . . . (Then follows the story of his appointment already given)

. . . So he was appointed. After this Holt voted with me, and we got along very well together, until one day when he asked me what I thought would be the result of interstate war. I was in the act of stepping out of the door, and, remembering the fact that Holt's money was all invested in Missouri bonds, jocularly remarked that of one of the results I felt quite certain—state bonds would be a drug on the market. From that moment Holt became my bitterest foe. . . .<sup>131</sup>

<sup>128</sup> A. H. A. Report, 1911, Vol. II, p. 532.

<sup>129</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 401-404.

<sup>130</sup> Among Holt's articles which show the intense hatred of which he was capable, are found those in the *National Intelligencer*, March 28, 1861; a pamphlet, "Treason and Its Punishment," 1865; and in the *Philadelphia Press*, October 12, 1883.

<sup>130a</sup> See reference for 119a.

<sup>131</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 17, 1884. Holt denied this in a subsequent article.

Black wrote to Dix in regard to the unfortunate and acrimonious quarrel:<sup>132</sup>

It pains me therefore to see the difficulty between Holt and Thompson. Of course you know Holt well enough to make you sure that he is not only an incorruptible but a very able man.

Thompson is in my estimation, as upright, true and honest a man as ever lived; one of the most efficient executive officers this Government ever had and always true to his duty as he apprehended it. They are quarreling on a point where they are both right and both wrong. The order in question was given. Holt heard it and Thompson did not. What is there in this to make an issue about? I think the construction upon Thompson's despatch that it was a violation of official confidence was a very harsh one. On the whole this business ought to be dropped just where it now is, and if you meet Holt, I think you ought to say so. I have no influence that I know of with either of the parties.

A confidential account of what actually took place, and who did and who did not hear the orders concerning the *Star of the West*, is contained in the two following letters. It is noticeable that the cautious Black did not reply until after the Administration was over. The reason was that Thompson intended to put the letter in a paper to answer Holt.

WASHINGTON, D. C.  
JANUARY 14th, 1861.

TO HON. J. S. BLACK  
DEAR SIR:

The uniform frankness which has ever been maintained between us, makes it proper for me to address you certain enquiries and to ask a candid reply. I am doing this simply to vindicate myself against the attacks of enemies which I anticipate will be made on my return home.

When the question was up before the Cabinet on Wednesday January 2nd whether re-enforcements should be sent to Major Anderson; Did we or did we not agree to send a messenger to Fort Sumter to ascertain his true condition and also his wish as to re-enforcements?

Did you not then say to the President, does the sending of a messenger imply that no additional troops are to be sent till the return of the Messenger—& did or did not the President reply then rather impatiently raising both hands, "Judge Black, it implies nothing," or something to that effect?

<sup>132</sup> *Philadelphia Press* (by Burr), September 10, 1883.

As the letter of the S. C. Commissioners was brought in while Mr. Holt was taking down the interrogatories to be propounded to Major Anderson; that subject being about finished; I read the letter, discussion arose as to the proper disposition of it, it was determined to return it. The endorsement was made by the President. Mr. Glosbrenner was called in and directed to deliver to the Commissioners. Did or did not the question of sending re-enforcements ever become a substantive subject of consideration in the Cabinet after the reading of the letter? As I aver before high Heaven I never heard the remark of the President, re-enforcements must be now sent—did you hear that evening such a remark from the President?

On Thursday as we left the Cabinet meeting you asked me in a spirit of kindness and friendship—If troops have to be sent to Charleston, will you feel bound to resign your place in the Cabinet; I replied, I would feel myself bound to do so. You then asked me to see & talk with you before I acted. I promised you, I would do so but added I had no thought you could change my purpose.

At the time of that conversation did or did you not know that troops had been ordered by the President or with the President's knowledge to re-enforce Major Anderson.

I hope you will do me the justice to give me your recollection of the facts in response to these questions and I will not permit myself to doubt your willingness to do so.

With high regard

Your friend

J. THOMPSON.<sup>133</sup>

WASHINGTON,  
MARCH 18, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR:

My reply to your note is somewhat late.<sup>133a</sup> *in the day may seem late*; but your communication in the "Intelligencer" of this morning reminds me that I can not put it off any longer *withhold* without seeming to do you injustice.

That *an order to reinforce Fort Sumter was given* the "Star of the West" was sent by the War Department *to Fort Sumter* with men and provisions for Fort Sumter in pursuance of the President's order made in Cabinet council I think is a fact well established by the testimony of Messrs. Holt, Toucey and Stanton. But it can not be proved by me for though I was present at the meeting I have no recollection of hearing such an order given. As it escapes me I can readily believe that you and Gov. Thomas

<sup>133</sup> Black Papers, Vol. XXXV, L. C.

<sup>133a</sup> Italics indicate portions of the draft crossed out.

did not *observe* notice it; for we were all equally interested and excited by the affair we were dealing with.

I was present when you wrote your answer to Judge Longstreet's despatch. I wished you not to send it and used what argument and persuasion I could to make you withhold it. But I did not suggest that it *would be* was a breach of official confidence *I did not see then and do not now regard it so. Knew the precise situation in which you were placed*, as I certainly would have done if justice had permitted me to put such a construction *could have been put* upon the act. *with any show of justice, I know the precise situation in which you were placed and I believed then as I do now that you were not bound by any consideration had the same right to speak of your obligations of secrecy with regard to the 'Star of the West' were no greater than those of any other individual in the nation you were bound in silence concerning the 'Star of the West' by no obligation which was not equally binding upon the hundreds of other persons who had learned of her movements just as you had learned them.*

*all your*

*I am bound to say that your whole char duties as*

The records of the government will show how ably and up-rightly you performed your duties as the Head of the Interior Department. *In the unhappy troubles which were brought upon the country and upon one. In all the discussions and controversies* controversies which *marked the closing months* divided the Cabinet during the closing months of the last administration your bearing was always frank and free and generous to your colleagues who differed from you but marked at the same time by unyielding fidelity to your own strong convictions. *of You and I agreed in general and on a few occasions I am with great respect* we differed I am bound to say *Bound &c* that I never met a fairer opponent or *J. S. Black* stood beside a truer friend.

With profound respect      I am      Your svt.      J. S. B.

It might be well to remark that there is a lack of complete agreement upon influences, and upon facts in a few instances of testimony upon Cabinet matters. But the writer has also noticed that the same results often occur in the testimony of witnesses in trials where the witnesses have seen certain acts take place from their respective angles. No attempt has been made to secure a perfect consistency. History is not mathematics and cannot be limited by the same exact laws.



The attitude of Buchanan towards his Cabinet has been wilfully misrepresented by some writers. The myth of the Cabinet Rengency was concocted by Nicolay and Hay to injure Buchanan, and possibly in the hope of bolstering up the work of Stanton, and perhaps Black. The history of how Buchanan held his Cabinet together, when part of it was in disagreement on means of policy, marks one of the ablest pieces of work of the President's whole career. One main factor must be understood from the start. The overwhelming majority was agreed on the main aim of the policy, which was to avoid a great civil outbreak, and do all that could be done to promote a compromise so as to bridge the gulf and save the Union.

First, then, Black admitted in a letter to Curtis on September 26, 1881, that Buchanan was but little influenced by his Cabinet.<sup>135</sup>

I think the worst trouble he got into, or at least the one which in his subsequent life he remembered with more regret than any other, was caused by his resolution not to trust his constitutional advisers with his plans and modes of management. He overestimated his own power when he thought he could get along without their assistance. He took a great deal of unshared responsibilities. His consultations with outsiders were frequent and confidential but they did not control him. His object was to get information and he got a great deal which he did not communicate to his cabinet. . . .

Black believed that after his so-called "crisis" Buchanan put himself in a different attitude, but while there is no doubt that Buchanan did humor his Cabinet somewhat for political reasons after that time, there is some evidence that he still kept his own council, and went his own way. One incident illustrating this fact is that neither Stanton nor Black knew where the *Brooklyn* was going as late as the 25th of February when questioned by Tyler.<sup>136</sup>

The mental attitude of Buchanan was stated by a long-standing and very intimate friend who was highly (and it would appear justly) incensed at the editing of Burr's first interview (August 7, 1881) with Black. Joseph E. Baker was Buchanan's Collector

<sup>135</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 62.

<sup>136</sup> "Life and Times of the Tylers," Vol. II, p. 589.



of the Port at Philadelphia, a most trustworthy political lieutenant and friend. Buchanan's papers contain many of Baker's letters, chiefly concerned with the politics of Philadelphia, where he was the chief of one of the factions of the Democracy. Baker was a native of Lancaster and had known Buchanan since "I was about two feet high." In the interview in which he criticized some of Black's remarks, he touched on Buchanan's attitude toward his Cabinet, with reasons for his course.

In the inharmonious relations of the Cabinet the President was accustomed to ask many questions "for advice" which masked his designs. He may have employed duplicity or as it is sometimes called diplomacy in calling out the real intentions of his advisers. . . . The fact is that he made particular confidants of none of his Cabinet officers. As Cobb once said: "We were like a lot of boys." He heard them and acted on their advice if it accorded with his views and contrarily if it did not suit him.<sup>137</sup>

Baker also vigorously denied that Buchanan was timid, and claimed Black said so. This accusation Black vigorously denied in another interview<sup>138</sup> (about August 21, 1881), which has been quoted above. Speaking further on Baker's remarks Black said:

Mr. Baker however dishonors him when he charges him with duplicity in dealing with his Cabinet officers. He was never guilty of falsehood that I know of. I think Mr. Baker had his unreserved confidence, and it may be that I did not. . . . [He said that Mr. Baker was ignorant of the South Carolina Commissioner matter.]

The fact seems to be that the President did not try to deceive his councilors in any sinister sense, but that he was resolved to keep as much freedom as possible on the one hand, and keep his cabinet from breaking in pieces on the other. He asked advice of many persons, partly for information, and partly to avoid

<sup>137</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 20, 1881, article by Burr.

<sup>138</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881, article by Burr.

The President made the initial drafts of most of the documents sent by his secretaries. For example, the first draft of Holt's reply to Senators Hunter, Slidell, and Mallory over conditions at Fort Pickens is really Buchanan's work, and remains among his papers as an excellent testimony of his personal supervision. It will be given later.

committing himself, or answering questions. Some outsiders took this as an indication that he did not know what he wanted to do, and this delusion has persisted until now, whereas quite the contrary was really the case.

The members of the Cabinet have left a very bitter record of Buchanan's intercourse with the Senators. This attitude on the part of the President was perfectly natural. Here were the men that counted, as far as he was concerned. Some of them, like Slidell, were men of long years of friendly association. They were men of mature age and long political experience; they represented the States of the Union, they had been his pillars in the legislative branch. They had greatly contributed in making him President. He looked on them as barriers between him and his foes. It was to be expected that he should regard these men as more important than his ministers, whom he considered more as advisers and officers to do his bidding.

Thompson, who had much respect for both Davis and the President, gives his opinion of their logical political relations: <sup>139</sup>

There is not the least doubt that the warmest personal relations existed between Mr. Davis and the President. He consulted him on all matters of importance and gave considerable weight to his opinions. Really Davis was looked upon in the Senate as the champion of the Administration. He represented interests upon which the President leaned for support, and it followed that he should be consulted when an important step was to be taken. This relationship grew rather than diminished up to the very last. To such an extent was it carried that some members of the Cabinet were actually jealous, and thought it a slight upon them that the President should prefer to consult with one outside of the Cabinet.

. . . There were reasons for his moderation. You must know that Buchanan was the President of the South. He depended upon Southern politicians for support, and, therefore, must look to them for advice and counsel.

After his message of December, there was a rapid cooling of his relations with men of the Gulf State group. They urged him for a while and, it must be admitted, paid little attention to his convenience. It is difficult for admirers of Buchanan to pardon this incessant importuning to recognize the legality of

<sup>139</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 17, 1883.

Secession or to evacuate Charleston harbor. Still, it must be also remembered that these men were likewise in hot water, being constantly flooded with letters desiring information upon matters of governmental policy. It was a difficult time in all quarters. After the message of January 8th, personal intercourse practically ceased between the President and the Gulf State group. Still, Buchanan had information from that section through men employed in minor civil positions, and through a great mass of correspondence.<sup>140</sup>

After Buchanan refused to send Anderson back, some Southern Senators made insulting remarks tending to break down respect for him. Buchanan would have been indeed very obtuse had he not been worried over the state of the country, but when one goes through the annals and sees the vast amount of work he personally dispatched, the number of people he received, and the long hours of Cabinet counsel, such remarks are seen to be due to the fact that Buchanan was firmly holding to his correct legal position that he had no power to change the relationships of the State to the Union without Congressional assent.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 221, 222.

<sup>141</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 488.

Toombs, Benjamin, and the more courteous Davis soon split with the President on the issue of the day. Mallory, Hunter, and Slidell were among the others. On the other hand, the President seems to have retained pleasant relations with Bayard, Cushing, Bigler, Judge Campbell, and a host of border-State and conservative Southern State men to the close of his administration and after.

As an example of disagreement of a milder type, the following statement by Davis is submitted after the South Carolina episode. It was written at a time when he felt very bitter towards the Administration:

"President Buchanan has forfeited any claim which he may have had on our forbearance and support. I regard his treatment of South Carolina as perfidious, and place no reliance upon him for the protection of our rights or abstinence from hostility to us. In this do not understand me as alleging a wicked purpose—his evil deeds rather spring from irresolution and an increasing dread of northern excitement. He is said to fear that his house at Wheatland may be burned & it is reported that he apprehends impeachment when the withdrawal of Southern Senators shall give the requisite majority in the Senate to convict him."—Davis to J. J. Pettus, "Works of Jefferson Davis," Vol. IV, p. 565.

The following was written years later, after more reflection. The

Enough has been said to substantiate the statement of Buchanan's niece, found in her very able paper contributed to Curtis' biography: <sup>142</sup>

I knew quite intimately nearly all the members of his Cabinet, and heard a good deal of their conversation, and I know with what respect they spoke of him, and that the whole tone of their conversation was that he was the master.

Sufficient extracts have been presented to show that it was the desire to seek the path of public duty, as he understood it, which led his Cabinet to give him their respect. Cobb, Holt, Black, King, Thompson, and also Floyd are prolific in such testimony.

first half has been often quoted, but the last part which is very fair and candid has been generally omitted by Northern writers:

"Mr. Davis remarked that Mr. Buchanan more than fulfilled the European idea of a Chief-of-State in his social relations than any American since Washington. He was dignified, polished, reticent, and suave; fond of lady-gossip and atmosphere of intrigue, a stickler for the ceremony of power. His misfortune was as regarded his reputation North, that he could not forget in a month, and at the dictation of a party only representing the majority of one section, all those principles which had been imbibed in his youth, and formed the guiding stars of his career through over fifty years of public service."—John J. Craven, "Prison Life of Jefferson Davis," London, p. 302.

<sup>142</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 676.

## CHAPTER IV

### BUCHANAN'S POLICY, 1860-1861

Buchanan's Policy from November 1860 to January 1, 1861—Cabinet Ministers and Councils—Preparing the Message—The Message, an Analysis in the Light of the Past, Present, and Future—The Question of Fort Sumter—Floyd and Buchanan—The Legal Aspects of the Position of the Government—The Rôle of Major Anderson and its Effect on the Administration—The Critical Days of December and their Effect on the President's Course.

Buchanan, as most other public men, realized that the prospect of a Republican President would be received with considerable apprehension by many Southern people. In the month that intervened before the convening of Congress, Buchanan was absorbed in preparing his message. The actual drafting was mostly done in the State Department, where he usually spent the morning in a room set apart for himself. It is not possible to sketch the daily chain of events entirely, but the general trend is discernible. On November 7th, the following entry occurs in Floyd's diary:<sup>1</sup>

The President wrote me a note this evening, alluding to a rumor which reached the city, to the effect that an armed force had attacked and carried the forts in Charleston harbour. He desired me to visit him, which I did, and assured him that the rumor was altogether without foundation, and gave it as my opinion that there was no danger of such an attempt being made. We entered upon a general conversation upon the subject of disunion, and discussed the probabilities of it pretty fully. We concurred in the opinion that all the indications from the South looked as if disunion was inevitable. He said that whilst his reason told him there was great danger, yet his feelings repelled the convictions of his mind.

The next day Floyd noted that Buchanan was busy in the State Department, drafting his message.

<sup>1</sup> Pollard, "Robert E. Lee and His Lieutenants," p. 791.

As has been said before, Pollard had a hatred for both Buchanan and Davis. His own comments are not to be regarded, but the diary seems to be genuine.

On November the 9th the President took up the administration policy with the Cabinet in formal council:

Floyd continues: <sup>2</sup>

A Cabinet meeting was held as usual at one o'clock; all the members were present, and the President said the business of the meeting was the most important ever before the Cabinet since his induction into office. The question he said which was to be considered and discussed, was the course to pursue in relation to the threatening aspect of affairs in the South especially in South Carolina. After considerable amount of desultory conversation, he asked the opinions of each member of the Cabinet as to what should be done or said relative to a suggestion which he threw out. His suggestion was that a proposition should be made for a general convention of the States as provided for under the constitution, and to propose some plan of compromising the angry disputes between the North and South. He said that if this were done, and the North or non-slaveholding States should refuse it, the South would be justified before the whole world for refusing longer to remain in a Confederacy where her rights were so shamefully violated. He said that he was compelled to notice at length the alarming condition of the country, and that he would not shrink from his duty.

Floyd states that Cass deplored Southern injuries, favored a convention and coercion; Secession he held illegal. Black was for a convention, coercion, and re-enforcements to Charleston. Cobb was hopeless upon the future of the Union. Holt did not advise a convention, because in case it failed he thought it would accelerate Secession. Thompson was for a convention. He was opposed to coercion, which would drive his State to direct action. Toucey was for a convention, and believed that retaliatory State measures would bring the Northern fanatics to their senses. Floyd described himself both as opposed to Secession and rashness. He believed the Republicans would be powerless to do anything. His statements of his position are practically the same as given by Trescot's Narrative.

The idea of a convention was neither new nor novel. Many of the conservative Democrats and border-State men were for this means of adjustment. Two of the ablest judges of Buchanan's own State were strongly in favor of the plan, Judges

<sup>2</sup> Pollard, "Robert E. Lee and His Lieutenants," pp. 791-793.

Woodward<sup>3</sup> and Lewis.<sup>4</sup> Buchanan's idea of Southern moral justification was a long standing conviction as will be shown in taking up his message. It was perfectly consistent with his denial of the legality of Secession.

Buchanan was ready about this time to issue a proclamation of his policy. He asked Black about such a plan, but Black advised him to wait until Congress convened. This Black later regretted, because as time went on, the President felt confident that he could kill the idea by an exposition of the subject. Buchanan also at an early date asked Black about his opinion of the nature of the Union as a compact, and whether the South had a legal right to secede. He cited Rawle as an eminent authority for the legality of such an (see below) act, but he was inclined to disagree, and was glad to find Black did not hold the idea either.<sup>5</sup>

When Black saw his chief set on the idea of going over the whole subject in detail, he prepared at his request a sort of a draft such as he said might have been used for a proclamation. Buchanan was not satisfied with it. He said it was provocative, and asked Black to write another confining himself to a legal statement of the case. He had marked out a noble and impartial course for himself, saying to Black at this time:

"I desire to stand between the factions like a day's man with my hand on the head of each counselling peace."<sup>6</sup> If writers would print a few more of these noble and patriotic utterances instead of finding fault with the President's policy, the reading world might approach a fairer judgment of Buchanan's character.

Before Black drew up the final opinion, Buchanan was evidently drafting and redrafting opinions on the subject. It was his custom to draft and redraft many times in the case of important documents. His nephew states he went through the same procedure on his inaugural.<sup>7</sup> There is also the possibility that he brought some of Black's first draft before the Cabinet. Stanton's friends say he was consulted also around the tenth.

<sup>3</sup> Woodward to Black, letter; see topic Black and Buchanan above.

<sup>4</sup> Konkle, "Life of Chief Justice Ellis Lewis," Philadelphia, 1907, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881; article by Burr.

<sup>6</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 10, 1883; by Burr.

<sup>7</sup> See Curtis, Vol. II, p. 187.



His opinion had little weight with Buchanan, who considered him not very profound on constitutional law.<sup>8</sup> All through this period the President was sounding public opinion. Floyd speaks of the meeting of November 10th, as follows:<sup>9</sup>

Nov. 10. We had a cabinet meeting to-day at which the President read a very elaborate paper, prepared either as part of his message or as a proclamation. It was well written in the main and met extravagant commendation from Gen. Cass, Gov. Toucey, Judge Black and Mr. Holt. Cobb, Thompson and myself found much to differ with it. Cobb because it inculcated submission to Lincoln's election, and intimated the use of force to coerce a submission to his rule; and because it reprehended the policy of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. Thompson because of the doctrine of acquiescence<sup>9a</sup> and the hostility to the secession doctrine. I objected to it because I think it misses entirely the temper of the Southern people and attacks States Rights doctrine on the subject of secession. I do not see what good can come of the paper, as prepared, and I do see how much mischief may flow from it.

On November 13th the general situation was again overhauled in a formal session. Floyd noted:<sup>10</sup>

We had a long session of the cabinet today. The President read a good paper suggesting a convention of the States for an amicable adjustment of pending difficulties. He is uncertain whether he shall make it a proclamation or part of his message.

...

He also noted financial stringency in New York.

On the 17th of November Buchanan propounded a set of questions to Black as the latter had requested him. These were to be the basis of his attitude toward the Southern question. Whether the first opinion was alone an answer to the questions of this date is not known, but from what Black says it would seem that they were not, and were of a less legal nature.

<sup>8</sup> See article on Stanton. He was appointed Attorney-General at Black's request because they were friends; because Black wanted a man he thought he could rely on; and because they were trying some cases in the Supreme Court.

<sup>9</sup> Pollard, "Robert E. Lee and His Lieutenants," p. 794.

<sup>9a</sup> To the election of Lincoln.

<sup>10</sup> Pollard, "Robert E. Lee and His Lieutenants," p. 795.

This opinion<sup>11</sup> was delivered on November 20th. He concluded that the government could act only on the defensive, that it could take care of its property, and enforce the decrees of its courts on individuals; but it showed that there was no common law for the federal government to use in absence of specific legislative commands, and that to enforce the law against united opposition in any state "would be simply making war upon them"; that a declaration of war would *ipso facto* expel a State from a Union. Buchanan's subsequent ideas on the subject were incisive.

<sup>11</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 21, 22; Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 319-324.

According to a well-known writer, Mr. Corwin, who is an extreme nationalist, Black erred in the matter in refusing to send troops against the people of a State.—Corwin, "National Supremacy," pp. 242, 243.

It is one of the many attempts to read into the words domestic violence meanings not intended by the ratifiers of the Constitution. The instrument but not the interpretation of some of the framers was accepted by the ratification conventions.—Fowler, "Sectional Controversy," pp. 248, 249.

The incidents which Mr. Corwin uses are not identical. They are cases where Federal laws were opposed by individuals in a State and not supported with the will of the people *en bloc* as a State expressing itself through its proper representatives in a convention. Jackson's act has been discussed by Curtis, a more nationalistic thinker than Buchanan himself.—Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 46-48.

Mr. Corwin has avoided use of references that counteract his theory.—Scott, J. B., "The United States of America, A Study in International Organization," p. 201 *et seq.* Fowler, "Sectional Controversy," p. 220.

Some of the States even reserved the right to draw their granted adherence to themselves.—Fowler, *ibid.*, p. 26.

Jackson did not behave like a nationalist in the matter of the Georgia Indians; nor in his farewell address.—*Statesman's Manual*, p. 391.

Works of Stephens, Davis, Tyler, and Tucker have ably and successfully upheld contrary doctrines. Had the ratifiers of the constitution ever dreamed of Mr. Corwin's theories, the instrument would have never been ratified. Even granting the privilege of a peaceful revolution it narrowly escaped defeat in New York and Virginia. The fetish of which he speaks had found plenty of adherents before the Civil War.

A nationalist like Hamilton saw the impracticability of State coercion.—Fowler, "Sectional Controversy," p. 26.

If this phrase did not mean anything, as Mr. Corwin would have us believe, then the Fathers were a group of deliberate frauds who spoke to deceive. And if this were true, their idea was killed by the interpretation of the ratifiers of the document. To say the least, there were always two schools of thought on the subject.

Those writers, however, who extol Black, and adversely criticize Buchanan for their stand on the matter of the Union, will find no stronger statement against coercing by force the people of a State into admitting the supremacy of the Federal Government than is found in the last paragraph of this paper of Judge Black in any official document of the President.

While<sup>12</sup> these formal consultations were in progress there were also many other meetings between the President and one or more of his Cabinet, and between the members themselves. Some time between the 19th and the 26th of November Floyd telegraphed Davis, and notified Mason and Hunter to come to Washington. Davis says that he was sent for by two members of the Cabinet. The other one was probably Cobb. Floyd's idea was not to get Davis to see about the President's message, so much as to quiet his apprehensions in regard to Fort Sumter being attacked, in the possibility of which event he desired to send reinforcements.

The oft-quoted and over-estimated rumor, that Buchanan altered his message to a considerable extent, is dispelled by Thompson, who was questioned on the subject at the time when Davis stated it in his book.<sup>13</sup>

"I . . . think the President told me that he had written him privately to come up and talk over the message with him."<sup>14</sup>

Davis says nothing of any such letter in his book, so perhaps Thompson was mistaken.

"Did his visit have any effect upon the tenor of the message?"

"If so, it was imperceptible to me. I heard it read at a Cabinet meeting, and afterward read it over carefully myself before it was seen by Davis. I heard it read again after Mr. Davis had spoken with the President and could detect no change whatever."

<sup>12</sup> November 13. President gave \$100 for the famine relief in Kansas. November 23. "The President repeatedly expressed himself against the secession movement believing that before revolutionary measures are adopted every constitutional and legal means ought to be exhausted."—*Richmond Enquirer*.

Also announced the President had finished his message.

<sup>13</sup> Jefferson Davis, "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," New York, 1881, Vol. I, pp. 38-39.

<sup>14</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, — *State?*

The fact that he took down Davis' remarks shows nothing, except that he was courteous and desired them as a matter of record. Davis admits that the message was so unlike what he wished that, when it was read, he publicly opposed it. Buchanan frequently kept memoranda of interviews. Davis and Buchanan were at odds from the start on the *legality* of Secession. Of his many friends one whose views were somewhat, but not wholly like his own (Buchanan's), was Senator Bayard <sup>14a</sup> of Delaware.

What Floyd accomplished was to bring Davis and the other two Senators to town a few days in advance of their normal arrival to be present at the opening of Congress. Buchanan would have without doubt gone over his message with them in any event. As has been mentioned, it was his custom to discuss public matters with a great number of prominent persons in order to get different light upon the public opinion in different parts of the country. He depended upon these very Senators to aid him in a peaceful solution of the crisis, and to protect him from any violent attacks which the radical Republicans might launch upon his Administration. Davis had stood by him nobly in 1850, when an attack had been made by John P. Hale upon some of his remarks during Buchanan's absence from the Senate. Hunter was a moderate man by temperament, and both he and Mason represented one of the leading border States in the Union. Buchanan was also strongly hopeful that inasmuch as he and his Administration had always supported the South in their constitutional rights in the Union, they owed it to him to make no attempt

<sup>14a</sup> "It is the President's duty under his oath of office to see that the laws are faithfully executed. But could the Government of this country ever have been founded for times like this among the persons [not clear] that gave it existence?"

"If when the reason leaves the law itself ceases, be true at any time is it not the time now? The framers of the Constitution made force impossible against the citizen of any State acting under State orders. The reason of Federal power was State consent and when that is denied what but the ultimio ratio regnum can be given when the reason for the law ceased.

"But I am clear that the details of war against the consent of a State against the whole or a part of her citizens will be without warrant [under anything—not clear—of the name of construction] of any provisions of the Constitution."—Bayard to Black, January 7, 1861; L. C.

to go out during his term of office. Then, he believed that the Republicans would come to terms, and the whole trouble would be over. These men were his friends, and comrades for many years. He was naturally bound to them by the inevitable ties of sympathy that such associations had brought. To have assumed that he would not hear the advice of the leaders<sup>15</sup> of the Democracy at so grave a crisis, when much of the destiny of the country depended on the conciliation of all factions, would be absurd.

An important phase in the final drafting of the message has been told as follows by Thompson:<sup>16</sup>

The draft of Mr. Buchanan's last message to Congress was up for consideration in the Cabinet. The spirit with which it should deal with the Southern question was an all important one to the public men of that section, and there was a great division in the Cabinet upon it. The members from the South were anxious to get all the concessions possible, and especially desired the message to deny the right of the General Government to use force against a State.

We had an earnest discussion upon that phase of the message said Mr. Thompson, to-day when reviewing the events of those days, and the President seemed exceedingly anxious to get all the light he could as to his powers under the Constitution. Judge Black was advising him that he had a right to use the whole mili-

<sup>15</sup> Horatio King, who had an interview with Buchanan, relates it as follows:

"Our chief clerk, Mr. Clements, and myself had an hour with the President last evening, and our interview was most satisfactory. Mr. C. has just returned from Tennessee, and brings good news from that State to the effect that nearly everybody there is opposed to the hasty action of South Carolina, and is in favor of one more effort to preserve their rights in the Union. The President appeared to be much gratified to be assured of this. He is, *as I supposed a firm Union man* . . . I have no doubt he will take strong ground in his message against secession as well as the right of secession; but were I allowed to guess, I would say that he will not be in favor of using force unless the property of the United States is interfered with, such as the taking of the forts etc. when he would be obliged to act. . . ."—King to Dix, November 27, 1860. King, "Turning on the Light," p. 28.

For the next thirty days King was very much excited, and did his best to have pressure brought to bear on the President to sustain and ward off all Southern suggestions.

<sup>16</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, March 4, 1883; by Burr.

tary force of the Government to protect the public property and enforce the laws in any State in the Union; and that a state has no right under any circumstances to dissolve its relations with the Federal Government. To this doctrine the Southern members strongly objected. Some of them expressed their opinions upon the subject quite freely. I went to the President quietly and asked him if he would go with me over the Constitution and the Convention that framed it. I said to him that there was certainly no expressed power in the instrument itself that gave him the right to use force against a State, and I thought that I could convince him from the debates that it was the intention of the Convention that framed the fundamental law of the land to deny either to the President or Congress any such power. He asked me to bring the authorities. I went to my department, got the report, marked the pages where this question was under, and then went to him with them. We looked over the subject carefully together, and then I left him. When I called again for a Cabinet meeting he said: "Thompson, you are right on one important point; it is clear to my mind that there is no reserved or expressed power granted by the Constitution to use force against a State for any purpose. It is also apparent that the framers of the instrument intended to deny both to the President and to Congress any such power. I am also convinced that a State has no right to secede from the Union." I was, of course, pleased that the President had reached the conclusion I had urged upon him.

When the Cabinet met I saw he had the Constitution and the report of the Convention before him on the table. The subject was soon under discussion, and Judge Black most earnestly urged his views upon the President. Much of the final discussion was provoked by this phrase in the message:

"Coercing a State by force of arms to remain in the Confederacy, a power which I do not believe the Constitution has conferred on Congress."

This was the phrase Judge Black especially objected to. General Cass thought it could do no harm, and the rest of us were in favor of it. When it was decided that it should remain the President said to Judge Black:

"I cannot agree with you that the Constitution gives the General Government the right to use force against a State, and I think, if you will read these authorities, you will change your mind"—referring to the debates I had given him.

Judge Black did not accept his defeat with very good grace, and said to me that he did not see how he could submit to such a conclusion. I said to him that he of all men should stand by the



Administration. He and the President had long been friends and were from the same State. He and I were very intimate and talked a great deal about the situation, and he was often restless over the President's decisions over a great many matters.

This narrative of Thompson's, able as it is, overstates the case in some respects. In the first place; the attitude of Black is overdone, probably due to Burr's editing, as a reference to the paper (August, 1881) will show. Secondly: there was nothing new in this stand of Buchanan's. He had officially declared the same thing on coercion in a letter of 1859, after the John Brown Raid, and, as has already been shown, the whole trend of the public utterances of his long career had been in the same direction.

There were few public men in the country who were better read in the legal history of the country than he. What he concluded from reading the debates, was what any person might clearly conclude. In our own time constitutional lawyers and teachers have read into, and taught into, our Constitutional history strained interpretations of the work of the Constitutional and the ratifying Conventions. Had the idea of State coercion been noised around in the days of the beginning, after the manner of the post Civil War period, there would have been no United States. Had the rulers of that day desired the type of government that was forced on their posterity in 1861, they would have sat down and drawn a frank declaration of a unitary government and been done with it. What Buchanan saw was plain to any person who desired a Union by the consent of the governed.

Some of the States acted on the above idea by declaring themselves seceded, but provided for their officers to carry on Federal laws and duties, or provided that Federal officers should not be disturbed. Georgia did this, but South Carolina did not, though Rhett<sup>17</sup> was strongly in favor of it.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Herald*, December 21, 1860.

Part of Trescott's Narrative of December 2, 1860:

"He had come to the conclusion that the State would secede. 'But,' said he, 'you know I cannot recognize them; all I can do is to refer them to Congress.'"

"On Sunday night, when I saw him, he went over the ground again, said that he thought his message ought to be acceptable to the South, that he had spoken boldly and clearly and that all he had declared was



The message<sup>18</sup> which Buchanan presented to Congress on December 3d thoroughly discussed the whole Secession question. It has been admitted able by some of Buchanan's hostile critics. Curtis, whose legal abilities on constitutional subjects are well known, held a high opinion of it,<sup>19</sup> although he seems to have strained the meaning of certain portions to correspond to some of his own (Whig) ideas. Two paragraphs or more were said to have been omitted, but are now lost with the earlier drafts.<sup>20</sup>

He first showed the cast of his mind by going to what he considered the cause of the whole trouble. This was certainly not a bid for Republican popularity. As in 1859, he went back to his remarks of the thirties, and again stated that when the South feared for their domestic self-preservation the Union could not hold.<sup>21</sup> This feeling was brought about by the "long con-

that with regard to the laws of the United States and the property, he would discharge all the obligations of his official oath."—A. H. R., Vol. XIII, pp. 537-538.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 7-55.

<sup>19</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, Chapter XVI.

<sup>20</sup> These drafts are lacking in Buchanan's papers, which went through a fire before being housed at the Historical Society.

<sup>21</sup> J. M. Mason's daughter ("Life of J. Mason," p. 163) says that the Southern people never feared revolt. That is an overdrawn statement, but more true in Virginia than in other parts of the South. Riots in Charleston occurred in the thirties; recent race riots have taken place in Washington and Chicago. Burgess tells of the fright in Tennessee in 1859; and the following extract shows the situation in Georgia as early as 1844.

"What will it avail us at the South for the incendiaries to cease their work after our throats are cut and our houses burned? Sir, the negroes in Georgia are already saying to each other that great men are trying to get them free and will succeed, and many other expressions of similar nature. And if the agitation of the subject is continued for three months longer we will be compelled to arm our militia and shoot down our own property in the field. . . ." Hon. J. W. H. Underwood of Georgia to Howell Cobb, February 2, 1844, A. H. R., 1911, Vol. II, pp. 54, 55.

Probably the danger was not feared in certain sections of the border States, but in the cotton States it was considered by many a real menace. Buchanan expressed this conviction in letters as well as public addresses before 1860 and after. He touched on a great fact in concluding the paragraph—that when any people find that a government cannot and will

tinued and intemperate interference of the Northern people and had produced its natural effects."

The President then briefly cited the circulation of inflammatory circulars among negroes since Jackson's time, and resolutions introduced at Washington and sent over the country. It will be remembered that, as Senator, he wisely voted to receive, but table, such resolutions so as to prevent the linking of anti-slavery with the restraint of our speech or right of petition on the slavery issue. He then said that the moral responsibility rested on the States as sovereign bodies, and that the North "are no more responsible and have no more right to interfere with them than with the similar institutions in Russia or in Brazil."

Without forbearance no President could save the Union.

The question which Buchanan propounded to himself was:

"Does the election of 1860 constitute a valid cause for secession?"

When he answered that question in the negative it put him on the record as opposed to any violent action because of that election.

The new President, he believed, once feeling the burdens of office, would be conservative. He described the many limitations of the office of the executive, which showed his own strict construction views of the office. Then, in a philosophic vein, with one of his favorite phrases: "SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF, the day of evil may never come unless we shall rashly bring it upon ourselves." The idea of waiting for the overt act was in direct conflict with Cobb's opinions (November 13th), and had accelerated his resignation.

The doctrine of legal secession was declared to be of recent origin; it would lead to petty jarring republics; Jackson and Madison were quoted as opposed to it. The powers of the Federal Government were enumerated, and the supreme law clause was mentioned as a means to "secure the uninterrupted exercise of these high powers."<sup>22</sup> Davis agreed to that also.

not perform the sacred duty of protecting life and property, no feeling of loyalty can long endure. The Gulf States in 1860-1861 could not find many benefits which they could not better enjoy as independent States.

<sup>22</sup> Davis, "Rise and Fall of the Confederacy," Vol. I, pp. 150, 151.

The statement that the laws of the Federal Government in their legitimate sphere were as binding on the individuals of the States as if textually inserted therein was probably intended to be a very strong statement. It sounds like Black's theory of obedience to laws and elimination of sovereignty. As a fact there was nothing in it to disturb even a follower of Calhoun, because Calhoun cheerfully admitted that individuals owed obedience to Federal law but supreme allegiance to the State. The question of allegiance Buchanan did not touch. He considered state allegiance as "principles of false<sup>23</sup> honor" in 1861,<sup>23a</sup> but did not take it up at this time. He could hardly do so as the matter was never fully settled until the Civil War was closed.

Then followed a number of paragraphs devoted to the perpetuity of the Union.<sup>24</sup> He correctly noticed that the Articles of Confederation were perpetual. He might have continued to observe that in that case a peaceful revolution brought about desired

<sup>23</sup> "false"—mistaken.

<sup>23a</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> In speaking of the Virginia resolutions, Buchanan denied that Madison ever intended a resort to violent measures to change the Constitution. There was an implied denial that these measures gave the right to any irregular proceeding like secession. He generally referred to Madison's report to sustain this point. The South, however, and Calhoun had claimed that his doctrine of secession grew from these resolutions. Madison had denied it when he became alarmed at the proceedings of South Carolina in 1832, but he had found himself much embarrassed at that time. Upon the Kentucky resolution, Buchanan was silent. Both parties in the papers in 1860 raked the files for letters of the fathers supporting their causes. One thing is certain, that the great Democrat, Thomas Jefferson, favored peaceful rather than violent separation at the time of the Missouri Compromise, although he deeply deplored any such event. He was also against military coercion of the West in case that part of the country seceded in 1803.

(R. G. Horton, "Youth's History of the Civil War," p. 68. At an earlier date see Jefferson's Works, edited by T. J. Randolph, Vol. IV, p. 14. Jefferson's Works, Ford Edition, Vol. IV, p. 191; Vol. VI, p. 66.)

Edward Everett tried to show that Jefferson had spoken of naval coercion, but he neglected to indicate that this was an occasion in which secession from the Union was not contemplated. Jefferson would never have consented to keep over one-third of the states in the Union at the point of the bayonet.

changes through the agency of the Congress. The precedent was plain to any thinking person as to what could be done to avert disaster.

Buchanan delivered an able attack on the personal liberty laws, declaring the historical necessity of the Fugitive Slave Act as a means of Union; the nullity of personal liberty laws, and that unless the States repealed those acts "it is impossible for any power to save the Union." In passing, it may be observed that, whether right or wrong by individual creeds, the laws were a violation of the Constitution. The States passing them refused to secure the property of other persons in the Union. This was revolutionary, and a breach of the essence of government. It was a violation of the articles of government and all principles of political science. To live in a Union which could not secure the protection of the property of its citizens would be ruin in the long run. The North in such a case would be violating the Union. The Federal compact had been violated. Buchanan's attitude was not Calhounism, but an argument based on the general principle for which governments were supposed to exist. It is also well to remember that in some States, fines were laid on persons who might comply with the Federal acts. A man who "rescued," in Buchanan's term, a proven fugitive by violence from the possession of a marshal for his punishment was liberated on a writ of habeas corpus by the supreme court of Wisconsin. Still, Northern writers decry Southern nullification! These personal liberty acts were the creation of State legislatures and not sovereign conventions,—a state of things more easily suited to Federal coercion. What would the North have said had the Administration forced the carrying out of the Fugitive Slave Law by large bodies of troops?

The President declared that unless the repeal of these acts took place, the Constitution would have been wilfully violated, and the injured States, "after having first used all peaceful and constitutional measures to obtain redress, would be justified in revolutionary resistance to the government of the Union." Further on he declared: "It (Secession) may or it may not be a justifiable revolution but still it is revolution."

Buchanan was practically compelled to make these statements

to avoid inconsistencies. His memory could carry him back to 1856 when he declared the election of Fremont would cause the disruption of the Union, an event which caused him to say: "God save the Union! I do not wish to survive it."<sup>25</sup> His later support of the war displeased one of his old friends who wrote:<sup>26</sup>

In one of your letters now before me you indicate and defend in the strongest terms the very position the South has assumed. Your countenance of the Government is less strange than the rest for you are peculiarly situated and in your heart cannot bless this war upon us.

While it is entirely possible that Buchanan may have remarked as stated, I have only thus far found citations where he stated such a possibility as an inevitable and deplorable result rather than with approbation.

Again, in 1857, after the Dred Scott case and during the time his foes were harrying him over Kansas, a Virginian politician, Colonel Parker, quotes him as saying:<sup>27</sup>

"If the Personal Liberty laws are not repealed in the North, the South will have a right to secede and ought to secede."

It will be noticed that in neither of these cases is a legal right discussed. Also, it has been noted that in the middle of November, Buchanan already made practically the same statement that he made in his message. Whether or not Buchanan did admit a legal right to secede before he became President is very doubtful, but not absolutely impossible. In either case *the fact remains that he did not consider Lincoln's election a valid cause and that fact left no doubt of his stand in 1860-1861.*

The President also reviewed the nature of his functions in the crisis. Like everything else, he construed the Militia Acts of 1795 and 1807 strictly. Lincoln, at a later date, pulled them into ludicrous shape to give his own acts the color of legality. For some weeks Mr. Lincoln, like Buchanan, did not try to execute the law where "the entire population would constitute one solid

<sup>25</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Bowen, of Baltimore, to Buchanan, April 17, 1861, H. S. P.

<sup>27</sup> *Virginia Magazine of History*, Vol. XIII, p. 85.

combination to resist him [a Federal officer]." Such a matter has been covered in speaking of Black's opinion. According to the ideas of the time, it would have been unconstitutional. But Buchanan gave Congress plenty of opportunity to pass new laws to give ample force to such portions of the Constitution. He announced his policy concerning the forts, etc., which he maintained to the end. The declaration that he had no power to recognize any change in State status in its relation to the general government, saying that such power belonged to Congress alone, convinced many that he intended to take no steps toward secession. It was also bound to discourage those who hoped he would advise recognition.

Upon the subject of coercion of a State to remain in the Union, Buchanan displayed thorough knowledge and marked ability. He declared it was not in the delegated powers, and had been refused by the convention. Madison was cited as the chief support, but a host of others could have been found in the ratifying conventions to the same effect. In such a war, he said, the Union was bound to be destroyed because the seceding States, if defeated, would afterward be held as provinces. This was a foreshadowing of Stevens' theory of reconstruction. It will be remembered that certain Republicans spoke of the Constitution being destroyed by Civil War. The truth is that the old Union died. The new political philosophy plus the use of text-books after the war altered the nature of the Union.

Even on the ground of expediency, war would be undesirable. The President pointed out that in such a case peaceable reconstruction would be impossible. He then stated the creed of his heart, which was truly a statement of the condition of things since the beginning of the Constitution:

Our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war. If it cannot live on the affections of the people, it must one day perish. Congress possesses many means of preserving it by conciliation; but the sword was not placed in their hand to preserve it by force.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The following interesting note is from the pen of an authoritative writer of the present day:

" . . . The difficulty of controlling by force the will of the people of a



While this might be a confession of his faith, as head of the Federal Government, he had to curtail his ideas, and make a consistency with the other portions of his message. Besides, he *never held the idea of permanent separation or independence of the Southern States*. Some new form of agreement ought to be reached. To this end he suggested Congressional amendments as the means to save the Union. These would, at this point, have been along the line of the Dred Scott case. In his message of January the 8th he went back to his favorite idea of a compromise line.

A digest of the policy which the Administration had decided upon appears to be as follows:

Secession is a nullity, but it is one of those State acts for which the Constitution does not provide a punishment. It is an act outside the sphere of Federal authority. When, however, any deluded individual does an act which violates a Federal law, he may be resisted or punished, provided Congress supplies the means.

The founders never intended to coerce a State or the people of a State organized as such. Such acts by them are nullities, to be ignored. The legal relationship of the States to the Federal Government was intended to be perpetual. A State cannot authorize an individual to commit an act against Federal law which she has once promised to uphold. As long, then, as the two spheres did not conflict, a clash could be avoided.

The criticism of the theory would be this:

Admitting that the Union was intended to be perpetual, yet so were the Articles of Confederation. By refusing to coerce the people of a State by force, the Fathers really prepared the way for a peaceful revolution. The revolution of 1789 was peaceful, the new government was an experiment based on consent of the people of thirteen units acting as thirteen units. While one of these units could not legally withdraw her consent, she could not have force brought to bear against her for the act. Nor could individuals be punished for acting by express authority of the

State so as to compel them to elect Senators and Representatives and perform various other obligations to the Union remains unsolved by any constitutional provision."—John Bassett Moore, "Four Phases of American Development," pp. 114-115, Baltimore, 1912.



agents (e.g. State Government) carrying out the will of the organized people of a State. Black practically admitted this principle when he said it was his private opinion they could not punish a man for granting clearance papers at State orders.<sup>28a</sup>

The Supreme law clause was not endowed with the right to force the people of a State. It could not transcend the Constitution. It was no more than a treaty clause and only applied to delegated or specific powers. This was the Southern and Democratic idea of the time.<sup>29</sup>

The Administration had decided on the theory of its policy, and prepared to carry it out.

The effects of the message were diverse. The radical Republicans, who were hot for blood-letting, were hostile to it. Some ridiculed it. It marked the parting of the ways with some of the Southern Senators, because it did not admit the legal right of secession, and showed them any interference with Federal property was liable to cause trouble. If Buchanan had to hear the disapproval of the enemy press and Southern Senators, he had the consolation of seeing his policy endorsed by many in the border States and by conservatives and moderates everywhere.

Any reader may find in Miss Scrugham's "Peaceable Americans,"<sup>30</sup> or Coleman's "Life of Crittenden"<sup>31</sup> plenty of evidence

<sup>28a</sup> Since the Civil War the States have been prostrated and this doctrine tamely surrendered. The States are now as powerless as a collection of jelly fish.

<sup>29</sup> The remainder of the message found foreign affairs in the main satisfactory. Mexico was still insulting in her manners. Cuba was a desirable purchase; Kansas had at last been settled except that it was now in need of aid, due to famine; peace reigned in Utah, and the President argued for specific duties in the tariff.

<sup>30</sup> "Peaceable Americans," New York, 1922.

<sup>31</sup> Coleman's "Life of Crittenden," Vol. II, Philadelphia, 1871. Watson, "Life in the Confederate Army," pp. 81-89.

*Buchanan and Jackson:* To the cry copied in our day in text books, "Oh, for an hour of Jackson!" uttered by a class of people whose love of power desires to brush aside all constitutional guarantees, Mr. Buchanan gave a vigorous and pointed answer in his reply to the libels of General Scott in 1862.

"The General's supplementary note of the same day, presenting to me General Jackson's conduct in 1833, during the period of nullification, as an

of the compromise feeling of the time. In the Gulf States some of the Union minority wanted action, but Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia, while almost solid against coercion, were yet favorable for compromise. Lincoln drove North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, out of the Union. Maryland sent many of her sons South. Missouri was held by the Germans; and Kentucky desired to be neutral. The resources of those States who finally left the Union were a great aid to the Southern cause. Such were the results of what was regarded as coercion. Seward and Buchanan were both of the same mind in opposing coercion, and I believe Seward could have solved it far more satisfactorily than the more radical Republicans.

example, requires no notice. Even if the cases were not entirely different I had previously determined on a policy of my own, as will appear from my annual message."—Moore, Vol. XI, p. 284.

Curtis has thoroughly and ably treated the legal aspects of the topic.—See Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 47-48.

A few words may be added of psychological difference. While I have seen statements of Buchanan's, admiring Jackson's will power and sagacity in feeling the public pulse, I have never seen any tribute of his to Jackson's legal ability or intellectual powers. Anybody who cares to admit it knows that Jackson's attitude toward South Carolina was largely due to what he thought was a conspiracy against him by Calhoun. Backed by a cabinet of ex-Federalists, his actions were those of a South American dictator rather than a constitutional official. It is also well known that many of his party disapproved of this procedure. Jackson's farewell message, used by Buchanan in his book, breathes a very different spirit. His first work was largely that of Livingston and his second that of Taney who had embraced State Rights. In fighting South Carolina Jackson thought he was killing a rebellious enemy. In 1861 Buchanan at the start had looked to most of the Northern group to aid him in keeping the peace and keep off attacks on his Administration from the ultra-Republicans. The personal political situation in the two cases as well as the public state of mind was very different.

It might also be added that in the oft-quoted letter of Jackson to Buchanan on Nullification he spoke of the Union as a confederacy. Buchanan was not a disciple of the Nullification theory which was not identical with Secession. The chief remark of approval of Jackson was a statement in his farewell address in which he stated it was futile to think that the Union could be held together by force alone.—*Statesmen's Manual*, p. 151. The Jackson proclamation of 1833 was composed by the anti-States Right man, Livingston. The one here quoted was largely the work of Taney, who had been converted to it.

It has already been indicated that the problem of preparing the message was involved with that of Fort Sumter. Floyd was firmly against the idea of coercion, and also believed if a gloved hand were used, things would turn out to the satisfaction of the Administration and the State. He had been a student of the University of South Carolina, and knew conditions in that region. Cass and Black, on the other hand, were always urging reinforcements. We have already mentioned the fact that Buchanan was going over the matter with Floyd since early November (see diary above).

Towards the last of November the President became uneasy lest some effort would be made to seize the forts, and, according to Trescot, Floyd had moments of unrest himself. The following interview, reported by Floyd, leaves no room for doubt as to the President's determination not to hand over the forts.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Trescot's Narrative, A. H. R., Vol. XIII.

*Value of Trescot's Narrative:* Some of this work is very valuable; some is misleading. Trescot favored Secession at an early date and therefore lost such confidence of Buchanan which he may have had. The actual events in which he participated are valuable account. On the other hand it was his interest to make the most of the pledge idea although he understood the President's difficulties. His inferences on the details on the "cabinet crisis" are incorrect because he was not told just what did happen. He utterly lacked the ability to see the humane side of Buchanan's character, and his work suffers as a result. Some other criticisms of Chauncey Black and Holt on Crawford's "Fort Sumter" are inserted here as they are really on his narrative which Crawford used. In short, some of Trescot's inferences are erroneous while his account of participation, with due allowance for his secession feelings, may be regarded as valuable contributions to the period.

"Of course Mr. Trescot's account of my father's position in the Cabinet discussions is perfectly conscientious. But I think it is all wrong. The President *complained* that his views were too political and not *sufficiently* legal and technical. But I prefer that Father should state it for himself."—From Chauncey Black to Samuel W. Crawford, Crawford Papers, L. C.

Two letters from Holt (July 25 and December 28, 1885) contain the following remarks:

Speaking of the reason for his appointment, Holt said:

"While I have never doubted but that the preparation of the paper referred to led to my appointment as Post Master General, I do not know it as a fact."

(This, of course, was not Thompson's version of the matter.) He thought that Crawford was too severe on Buchanan.

Some time, probably in the latter part of November, the following discussion took place between Floyd and the President: <sup>33</sup>

"Mr. Floyd, are you going to send recruits to Charleston to strengthen the forts? What about sending reinforcements to Charleston?"

I was taken very much by surprise to find the President making this inquiry, indicating to my mind a change of policy on his part.

I said: "Mr. President, nothing about sending recruits to Charleston."

"Don't you" said he, "intend to strengthen the forts at Charleston?"

"I do not intend to strengthen the forts at Charleston."

Says he: "Mr. Floyd, I would rather be in the bottom of the Potomac tomorrow than that these forts in Charleston should fall into the hands of those who intend to take them. It will destroy me, sir."

And said he: "Mr. Floyd, if that thing occurs it will cover your name—and it is an honorable name, sir—with an infamy that all time can never efface, because it is in vain that you will attempt to show that you have not some complicity in handing over those forts to those who take them."

Floyd said he would risk his life and his honor on the declarations of the South Carolinians that they would not be touched.

He said to me: "That is all very well but pardon me for asking you, does that secure the forts?" I said, "No, sir; but it is a guarantee that I am in earnest in the belief that I expressed to you that the forts are secure."

Said he: "I am not satisfied."

Floyd said he was sorry for it. He offered to make out orders, but said it would mean conflict. He said the forts would be safe; the State would send her Commissioners to Congress, and

"I suppose that by this time your book is in preparation, & that of course the questions of which we conversed last summer have been settled, I refer particularly to the atrocious calumny reported to you by Trescot, which represented certain members of his Cabinet as having attempted to bull doze President Buchanan in a most insulting manner. . . ."

<sup>33</sup> Abridged from Floyd's somewhat florid speech at Richmond, 1861. *New York Herald*, January 17, 1861. Part also in the *Times*.

This speech has been much libelled by Northern writers.

that body could decide what to do. Floyd said that he would resign if Congress decided on coercion.

Buchanan finally agreed to see what General Scott would advise, and that ancient authority on the art of war was telegraphed to come from the West to the Capital at once.<sup>34</sup>

This conversation so excited Floyd that he sent for Davis, Mason, and Hunter to come up earlier than usual to Washington to assure Buchanan there was no danger to the forts.<sup>35</sup> Davis, while finding Buchanan concurring with some of his views, was not at all successful in persuading him to take the troops out of the harbor.

Most people have probably forgotten that the sites of the Federal forts at Charleston, and in some other places as well, were held on the basis of contract or conditional cession from the State to the Federal Government.<sup>36</sup> Up to a certain point the Administration and the State were agreed of the status. Davis says: <sup>37</sup>

Mr. Buchanan, the last President of the old school, would as soon have thought of aiding in the establishment of a monarchy among us as of accepting the doctrine of coercing a State into submission to the will of a majority, in mass, of the people of the United States. When discussing the question of withdrawing the troops from Charleston, he yielded ready assent to the proposition that the cession of a site for a fort, for purposes, lapses, whenever that fort should be employed by the grantee against the State by which the cession was made, on the familiar principle that any grant for a specific purpose expires when it ceases to be used for that purpose.

Upon another statement of the case, the Federal government was entirely incorrect. This was due to Black. Buchanan accepted it, and the Southerners were quick to point out the error in the matter. Black said that the Federal government had purchased the Federal property and owned it outright. As has been shown above, such were not the facts in the case. The only

<sup>34</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Floyd's speech at Richmond, *New York Herald*, January 17, 1861.

<sup>36</sup> For a brief account see Davis, "Rise and Fall of Confederacy," Vol. I, pp. 209-212.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 216-217.

things the Federal Government owned were the improvements they had made on the sites.

On the other hand, as Buchanan considered Secession a nullity, there was no reason for his giving up the forts as far as he was concerned.

The Southerners then said that if he was only keeping them as property, then, why garrison them, when a garrison only frightened the people? To this argument there was reason, for while the States could not claim the right to have the forts returned, it was very evident that the forts were intended to be used against foreign aggression alone, and not under any circumstances by the Federal government against themselves.

Buchanan would have been the last man in the world to have voluntarily given up the forts without the authority of Congress. No Democratic President from the North could have dreamed of such a thing in the face of the powerful political consequences. From the beginning it was evident to Black and Buchanan that the forts were a sort of a test case in which the whole future trend of events and the fate of the Administration were involved.

The President determined to present the matter of the status of the property to Congress.<sup>38</sup> He was firmly convinced that peaceful measures alone would localize the conflict, and felt it his duty to give them a peaceful direction. With the slender resources at his command, limited by the legal prerogatives of his office, he felt unable to conduct a war without a united North and a Congress willing to co-operate without limit.

To adjust this matter, four of the members of Congress of South Carolina sought an interview before the State actually seceded. They interviewed the President on December 8th and the 10th. On these occasions he only received them as private gentlemen. His regard of his Constitutional powers and proper limitations were always carefully observed. At a later date the South Carolinians found it to their advantage to take the position that Buchanan had given a pledge not to disturb the status quo. Such a thing he never intended in the sense of later accusation. Practically everyone has now come to the conclusion that no legal or formal pledging was undertaken. Even the South

<sup>38</sup> For full account of Buchanan's attitude in February, see below.



Carolínians seem to have admitted it at the time. The statement of the gentlemen is merely an expression of strong conviction and, as they were not received in a legal capacity, it need not have been considered as in any sense binding on them.<sup>39</sup>

What Buchanan probably intended was to lay his policy before them and carry it out, provided he knew in advance what they intended to do. His aim was in every way laudable. It was to localize the disturbance and give time for Congress to act, or have public opinion in the other States bring moral pressure to bear on South Carolina until some reconciliation should be reached. He never had any intention of so binding himself that he would not be free to act in any unforeseen circumstance. He was under oath to preserve the Constitution as he understood it, and his annual message showed that he did not intend to surrender the forts. He considered himself morally bound all the way through to do all he could to avert a crash that would wreck the Union. It was directly in line with his efforts in sending Cushing upon the 18th to South Carolina to try to keep things as they were until some overt act should be committed by the Federal Government.<sup>40</sup> But he did not change his mind.<sup>41</sup>

Anderson's move was wholly unexpected, and brought a baleful chain of circumstances. Had Buchanan restored the status he would have broken up his own government. Even Trescot,<sup>42</sup> who was a Secessionist, saw the President's position in this light. His duty to keep his government afloat was certainly paramount to his policy on the status of the forts in Charleston Harbour.

Pickens, elected Governor of South Carolina just before the State seceded, in order to put a halo on his head before his people, sent Colonel Hayne with a letter to the President. Trescot found out what the letter was in advance, and told Buchanan. The President asked for more time than overnight to answer (the indecent haste of Pickens is manifest) it, and Hayne con-

<sup>39</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 377.

<sup>40</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," pp. 87-88. This mission failed. Upon Cushing's return, the Cabinet met, but I have no account of it. Buchanan and Cushing were agreed on the main lines of policy.

<sup>41</sup> Crawford, *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> A. H. R., Vol. XIII, p. 553.



sented to wait until the next evening. Trescot, with the concurrence of Slidell and Mason, telegraphed to Pickens, and the letter was withdrawn, much to the President's satisfaction.<sup>43</sup>

The President had, however, drafted a reply<sup>44</sup> in which he firmly stated that Congress alone could act on his requests; that he had no power to hand over Fort Sumter, and warned the Governor that an attack on the forts would mark the beginning of a conflict. The act of one independent government seizing the property of another would be, he declared, always considered a just cause for hostilities. It will be noted that both the State and Federal governments were regarded as practically independent of each other, so that statement conveys no idea of recognition.

A new twist was now about to take place, as South Carolina had determined on secession.

The resignation of Cass, who differed with the President on his Sumter policy, has been reviewed above. Sufficient to say here, that the opportunity it gave to the President's enemies to increase their propaganda against him in the North, was not lost on the President. He gave it as one of the reasons for not taking Cass back, saying all the world knew of his resignation. The whole incident made him wary. Perhaps it increased his tendency not to confide in his Cabinet too much, so as to prevent their resigning for political reasons. It is not difficult to see how the Cass incident may have reacted on the "Black crisis," and have aided in securing Black's retention. Still, the friendship of the two men was probably the strongest link.

When Buchanan first received the news of the secession of South Carolina, he was at the residence of Mr. Parker, to attend the wedding of his daughter to Mr. Bouligny of Louisiana. It was a very Southern affair. On the same day he had written a

<sup>43</sup> A. H. A., Vol. XIII, pp. 541, 542.

<sup>44</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 384, 385.

The content of this reply shows that whatever he said on the tenth was not intended to hamper his carrying out necessary means to secure the fort.

Holt regarded Anderson as under an implied pledge to act on the defensive as outlined in Buchanan's letter to Hayne (January). But he was supposed to use his own judgment in repelling attack.—Holt letter, February 23, 1861; also in the Anderson Papers; Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 294.

letter to Bennett for the *Herald*, stating he was in the best of health, because the *Tribune* had featured a headliner on the 17th declaring him to be insane. Inquiring about a commotion that occurred in the hall after the marriage ceremony, Buchanan was informed by Mrs. Roger Pryor (Virginia) that South Carolina had seceded. Stunned for a moment, he sat down in his chair, but his prudence stood him in good stead. He asked for his carriage, and went home before committing himself, or stopping to be questioned. There he awaited the official information, which came some hours later.<sup>45</sup>

On the same day he drew up his reply to Governor Pickens' letter asking the surrender of the fort,—a letter that had been written on the 17th. Buchanan vigorously and ably set forth his prerogatives, stating he had no authority to make any such arrangement, and warning the Governor that an attack on the forts would mark the beginning of a civil war. The letter of Pickens, owing to the advice from Davis and Slidell, was withheld.<sup>46</sup>

The 22d and 23d set the Cabinet and the country in a whirl by the Stolen Bonds episode.<sup>47</sup> This was the second of the intense problems for the Administration.

Hardly had the news of Cass' resignation been noised through the country, when all eyes were again turned to Fort Sumter and Major Anderson. He had been especially selected by Floyd, because of his coolness and judgment, to replace Gardiner at Sumter when clouds appeared on the horizon. A man of high honor, bravery, and ability, he saw the difficulties in his situation, and strongly felt the responsibilities upon him. He seems to have understood his position better than Black, who seems only to have comprehended the fact that Northern public opinion desired the forts to be held, and discounted Southern feeling. About November, Anderson wrote to the Department:<sup>48</sup>

I will thank the Department to give me special instructions as my position here is rather a political than a military one.

<sup>45</sup> Mrs. R. A. Pryor, "Reminiscences of Peace and War," pp. 110-114.

<sup>46</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 384-385.

On the 24th-25th Pittsburgh became excited over the shipment of the cannon.

<sup>47</sup> See above on Floyd.

<sup>48</sup> Answer to a letter of the 23d of November from Washington.

In the main he was like Buchanan and, like him, believed it was his duty to forbear.<sup>49</sup> As he wrote to Pickens:

You know, Governor. My heart was never in this war.<sup>50</sup>

A letter after his removal to Sumter reveals similar statements. The following is taken from the copy sent to Buchanan:

W. A. GORDEN, ESQ.,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

JAN. II, 1861.  
FORT SUMTER,

MY DEAR SIR:

Indeed you are right—a cheering word from an old friend is most acceptable and goes direct to the heart. Like yourself, my sympathies are in the matter of the sectional controversy all with the South, but I must confess that I have lost all sympathy with the people who govern this State. They are resolved to commence their secession with blood. I shall do all that I can with honor to prevent the occurrence of so sad an event—but fear that all will be of no avail.

This morning they sank three vessels in the main entrance to this harbor. Their folly has closed their ports to the commerce of the world—and they now hope to keep the Government from sending reinforcements to me. Little do they know of the power of the General Government if it be compelled to resort to it. Until they fired on the U. S. flag day before yesterday, I had hoped that the Government would settle the matter without a resort to arms—but now, unless some mediation takes place, I do not see how a conflict can be avoided.

I have had a great deal of work to do since I came into the Fort to put it in condition for defence. I am today mounting some of my best guns, and if I have a few days more, hope, by God's blessings to be prepared for any force they may bring against me. My force is only about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of what it ought to be, and I am therefore compelled to arrange everything so as to make the best use for it.

Trusting that God will guide me in my duty to him and to my beloved country, I am sincerely, your friend,

ROBERT ANDERSON.

<sup>49</sup> *E.g.*, "Trusting in God that nothing will occur to array a greater number of states than have already taken ground against the general government."—January 6, 1861, Anderson Papers, L. C.

<sup>50</sup> Abner Doubleday, "Forts Sumter and Moultrie," New York, 1876.

Mrs. Anderson, although a Southerner, was much opposed to South Carolina. She continually harassed Buchanan to aid Anderson.—*E.g.*, Letter, December 3, 1860, Mrs. Anderson to Buchanan, H. S. P.

It is very difficult to see where Anderson received any definite evidence<sup>50a</sup> that any attack was to be made prior to his removal to Sumter. However, it was a perfectly natural act for a man who had been for some days in a harrassing situation of responsibility, not only for the property, but for the men in his command. Even those who disagree with his course cannot condemn him for taking it. Having what he regarded general orders, and seeing indications that he construed as a menace, he took the only course possible from his point of view. On the other hand, this course probably tended to discredit the policy of the commissioners in the eyes of their friends, and they naturally blamed Buchanan, who had acted without guile in the whole matter. The chain of events seemed to make for misunderstanding.<sup>51</sup> The only real encouragement for his course seemed to be the approval of the local militia officers who marched into Moultrie.<sup>52</sup> This proves nothing, as they were probably looking for a rupture, and their approval may have been based on the fact that they hoped to bottle Anderson in. The conservatives who had been trying to keep the peace were naturally most cast down, and affairs in Washington became very critical.<sup>53</sup> Anderson received many congratulatory notes,<sup>54</sup> some in response to his own anxious inquiry<sup>55</sup> as to whether he had made a mistake in his move.

Floyd was greatly surprised to hear that Anderson had gone

<sup>50a</sup> Even Floyd was uneasy over a possible outbreak and mentioned it to Trescot. See A. H. R., April, 1908, pp. 534-5.

<sup>51</sup> He knew of no intention to settle the matter by diplomacy, and declared even if a pledge had existed between Floyd and the Governor, the latter had violated it in making use of armed steamers in the harbor.—See Letter Book, December 31, 1860: to War Department, L. C.

<sup>52</sup> Anderson's Letter Book, December 28, 1860: Letter to War Department, quoting a remark of Lieutenant Hall of the South Carolina militia.

<sup>53</sup> *E.g.*, Robert N. Gourdin, December 27, 1860: Anderson in no danger; the State was pledged.

<sup>54</sup> Dix to Anderson, January 21, 1861. Winter Davis to Anderson, December 31, 1860.

<sup>55</sup> Crittenden to Anderson, February 18, 1861. Strong hopes for return of the States.—Anderson Papers, L. C.

The letters of his brother, Larz Anderson, who visited both Charleston and Washington, indicate a strong hope for peace if reinforcements would be dispensed with.—Anderson Papers, L. C.

to Sumter. He telegraphed Anderson directly, asking him for an explanation. The President first heard of the news from Davis, Hunter, and Trescot. In this oft-quoted interview he declared the move was against his policy. The President sent for Floyd, who said he had no official news. General Lane, and Senators Bigler, Yulee, and Mallory next appeared and remonstrated with the President. Slidell late in the day was authorized to telegraph that Anderson had acted against his orders, but he refused to go a step further, having said he would hear Anderson's side and consult with his Cabinet.<sup>56</sup> Again his firmness and caution saved the day for himself, for if he had promised to restore Anderson, he might have had a split in his ministry on his hands.

Buchanan called his Cabinet. Buell had also been summoned, and disagreed with Floyd upon the merits of Anderson's move while they were in the hall of the White House. Black reviews this Cabinet meeting as follows:

From the evening of the 27th to the morning of the 31st, three days and four nights, the removal of Anderson and the answer to the Commissioners were under discussion. The Commissioners had arrived on the 26th and news of Anderson's removal was received on the morning of the 27th.

That morning as the Cabinet were assembling and the members were dropping in one by one, Mr. Stanton communicated to Judge Black the startling intelligence from Anderson.

"Good," said the latter, "I am glad of it. It is in precise accordance with his orders." "It is not," said Mr. Floyd, who besides the President was the only person present. "But it is," retorted Judge Black. "I recollect the orders distinctly word for word." The President feared that Mr. Floyd was correct, and Mr. Stanton's memory was not clear. Judge Black suggested that the orders had better be sent for, and the dispute settled at once.

Upon inspection they fully confirmed his statement, and left the President no alternative but to support Anderson. Mr. Floyd alone persisted in the opposite. . . .

As soon as the Cabinet was formally opened, Floyd read his note<sup>57</sup> in a discourteous and excited tone (which has been considered above). The Cabinet divided on what to do with Anderson.

<sup>56</sup> Trescot's Narrative, A. H. R., Vol. XIII, pp. 544, 545.

<sup>57</sup> Floyd resigned on the 29th.

Joseph Baker,<sup>58</sup> who had come to Washington on the 26th, remarks:

. . . it [Anderson's move] called forth the latent differences in the cabinet which had for months been scattering thorns in the President's path. The President told me at the time that his Cabinet troubles gave him more annoyance than the political situation did. It is well to remember that whatever act originated with the President was contemptuously discussed by both extremists, and even the dismissal of a cabinet officer would have been unfavorably construed . . .

Commissioners to treat with the Federal Government had been appointed on December 22d. They had arrived in Washington on the 26th, but had postponed their interview until the 28th, when they were courteously received. Finding the cabinet divided upon the grave problems that concerned them, they were in a tense mood. They presented their official note the next day, attempting to claim that the President was violating a pledge, which he had no power to make, and which had not been at first thus intended. They also stated their powers, and asked for the evacuation of Charleston Harbor. They harassed the President for two hours on the 28th, but he stood by his position, bidding them look to Congress for relief.<sup>59</sup>

The Commissioners repeatedly pressed the President for the restoration of Anderson. Buchanan refused to commit himself to no avail. Finally he said:

"Mr. Barnwell, you are pressing me too importunately; you don't give me time to consider; you don't give me time to say my prayers. I always say my prayers when required to act upon any great State affair."

Why any text book writer should have the callous effrontary to belittle such a remark is nearly beyond comprehension. There have been a number of Presidents who felt the need of religion in giving consolation to their responsibilities. At another point the very devout nature of Buchanan will be noted. Suffice to

<sup>58</sup> Collector of the Port of Philadelphia, often referred to as one of Buchanan's few confidants.—Part of article in *Philadelphia Press*, August 20, 1881.

<sup>59</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," pp. 146-160.



say here that he believed in a "family altar"; that he had been in the habit of reading the Bible and Jay's Exercises daily for twelve years before 1861.<sup>60</sup> He used the expression frequently when he was hard pressed or crowded with work. Mrs. Pryor mentions it; <sup>61</sup> it appeared in a book published in 1859, and written in 1859 in which the President had used it before 1857, referring to the rush of candidates for offices and the cry for place; and it was written by Buchanan himself in a letter to Clarendon on March 27, 1858.<sup>62</sup> The idea that the President was starting out on a new road at this point, due to special conditions, is a miserable falsity born of mean motives.

Between the 27th and the 30th, the President sounded public opinion in Washington on the Sumter issue.<sup>63</sup> He told a number that he was inclined to send Anderson back, and watched the reactions. In nearly all cases Northern people were vigorously against this policy.

Unknown to him, Stanton, Sickles, and others had created an inflated enthusiasm by telegraphing politicians in the different Northern towns to fire salutes, have parades, and send congratulatory telegrams to the President for upholding Anderson's course.<sup>64</sup> As a result the President received many such missives sustaining his course, or rather pointing the way of "public opinion." Among the more belligerent there was real joy, and in some localities Anderson became the hero of the hour.

Buchanan was beset on all sides. No President in American history ever spent so terrible a ten days. All things seemed to vanish into chaos. Because he was unwilling and too perplexed to heed Judge Campbell, the latter wrote to Pierce that he was unmanned; and scored the incapacity of Congress as well.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 371-375.

<sup>61</sup> Pryor, "Reminiscences of Peace and War," p. 56. Mary J. Windle, "Life in Washington," p. 143.

<sup>62</sup> Moore, Vol. X, p. 199.

<sup>63</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," pp. 146-150. Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 371-375.

<sup>64</sup> E. P. Alexander, "Military Memoirs of a Confederate," p. 11. An excellent viewpoint. Also Lossing, "A Pictorial History of the Civil War," Philadelphia, 1866, Vol. I, p. 285 note.

<sup>65</sup> To Pierce, December 29, 1860.—Pierce Papers.



Others said worse things, but through it all the President kept the keynote of his policy,—the prevention of civil war,—believing and hoping that the darkest hour was but before the dawn and, if there was to be no dawn, to keep his hands free of the blood of his countrymen. Worried, harassed, he performed wonders of labor, and in the words of the historian Lyon G. Tyler:<sup>66</sup> “Take him all in all, Mr. Buchanan was decidedly the most gentlemanly, competent, and collected officer that had anything to do with the government from the secession of South Carolina to the firing on Fort Sumter.”

On the evening of the 29th, Buchanan read his draft to the Cabinet after a somewhat spirited session, which does not, however, seem to have made much impression on him personally. Black now became excited, and relates the following bit of history.<sup>67</sup>

None of us said a great deal about it [the reply] because all of us knew by experience that when Mr. Buchanan made up his mind he was immovable. No man ever filled the Presidential office who knew better than he did how to enforce the respect due to his station and I know of no one more tenacious of his opinion when his judgment was once fixed. He was absolute master in his own house. Therefore when that cabinet adjourned, I did not believe it possible that our official relations could continue.

I spent the most miserable and restive night of my life. My mind was in wild tumult and I arose the next morning determined to resign before night. . . . .  
 . . . Mr. Buchanan at once requested my presence but I hesitated to go for I knew the temper of the appeal he would make to me. I felt that he would place his demand that I remain by his side upon such grounds of personal friendship that it would make it impossible for me to leave him without laying myself open to the charge of having deserted a friend who had greatly honored and trusted me at a time when he was under the shadow of the greatest trouble of his life. He sent a second time and I went. I found him greatly disturbed and his first words were:

“Is it true that you are going to desert me?”

“It is true that I am going to resign,” was my reply.

“I am overwhelmed to know,” said he, “that you of all other

<sup>66</sup> L. G. Tyler, “Letters and Times of the Tylers,” Vol. II, p. 615.

<sup>67</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 10, 1883, by Burr.

men are going to leave me in this crisis. You are from my own State, my closest political and personal friend, I have leaned upon you in these troubles as upon none other, and I insist that you shall stand by me to the end."

He then reviewed our association and made such appeal to me as I knew he would when I responded to his summons. After he was through I replied:

"Mr. President, from the start I had determined to stand by you to death and destruction if need be. I promised that as long as there was a button to the coat I would cling to it. But your action has taken every button off and driven me away from you."

"What do you refer to?" said he.

"Your reply to the South Carolina Commissioners.<sup>68</sup> That document is the powder that has blown your Cabinet to the four winds. The Southern members will leave because you do not concede what they ask, and your conclusions make it impossible for them to stay. The paper is even harder upon the Northern members of your political household. It forces the Southern men out, and you cannot ask that we stay. I would not leave you for any earthly consideration so long as I could stay by you with self-respect, but I cannot do it, if the paper you have prepared is sent to the gentlemen from South Carolina."

The President seemed surprised that I took this document so much to heart and I confess that it took all the determination I had to announce to him my decision with relation to it, for his manner toward me was kind and his appeal to me earnestness itself. To my surprise he did not even argue the points of my objection as I expected he would. He heard me without a word and when I had finished said:

"Judge, you speak the words of my heart. I recognize the force and justice of what you say. The letter to the South Carolina Commissioners my tongue dictated, but not my reason. But

<sup>68</sup> Buchanan had known of plenty of cases to justify his attitude on aid from a hostile Congress.

"Congress so long delays troops we can't get them into the field until the commencement of the Vomito season at Vera Cruz."—Buchanan to Donelson (written while he was Secretary of State), January 29, 1845, Donelson Papers, L. C.

His letter to Marcy, August 29, 1856, shows the despair of the Democrats over the failure of the Republicans to pass Pierce Army Bill for needed troops. See Moore, Vol. X, p. 89.

His own administration did not get enough troops to keep the Indians quiet and run the Utah war properly. Seward alone of the Republicans favored military support in Utah.

I feel that we must not have an open rupture. We are not prepared for war, and if war is provoked, Congress cannot be relied upon to strengthen my arm, and the Union must utterly perish.

"But, Mr. President, you must stand by your position, and boldly, with your judgment."<sup>69</sup>

He did not hesitate a moment but turned to me and said:

"Your resignation is the one thing that shall not be. I will not—I cannot part with you. If you go, Holt and Stanton will leave, and I will be in a sorry attitude before the country. This is the greatest trouble I have had yet to bear. Here, take this paper and modify it to suit yourself; but do it before the sun goes down. Before I sleep this night I must know that this matter is arranged to your satisfaction."

In answer to the question as to whether the first note conceded the right of secession, Black replied:

No! no! a thousand times no! It is a gross libel upon the truth to assume that Mr. Buchanan's letter acknowledged the right of Secession. This was a question upon which his judgment was fixed at the beginning of the troubles and never modified. The paper was so unsatisfactory to the Southern members that they were bound to go. This certainly would not have been their conclusion if the President had acknowledged the kernel of the principle they were contending for. My objections to the paper were that it dallied with the enemies of the Government, implied certain diplomatic rights of South Carolina that could not exist, and yielded points that were unfair to the President's position.

The President accepted the paper and framed his answer to the so-called South Carolina Commissioners to avoid the points I had raised.

The objections, which he immediately set to work to prepare, were copied by Stanton. Their contents have long been known to the public. A. K. McClure,<sup>70</sup> who talked with Black on the subject, states that Buchanan had said in his first paper:

I have declined for the present to reinforce these forts [in Charleston Harbor] relying upon the honor of South Carolinians that they will not be assaulted while they remain in their present

<sup>69</sup> Had the President refused to sustain Anderson, the loan which the Government had attempted to float might have utterly failed. This would have virtually paralyzed the machinery of the Government.

<sup>70</sup> See Crawford, "Fort Sumter," for printed copy, pp. 153, 154. E. A. K. McClure, "Lincoln and Men of War Times," p. 277.

conditions but that Commissioners will be sent by the convention to treat with Congress on the subject.

From one of the objections on Black's paper, the inference seems to be that the President intended to recommend to Congress that it do something about the property in Charleston. This Black seems to have felt might be used later as a handle by the State authorities to claim *de facto* recognition. As all relations between the Federal Government and the States are officially conducted through the State Department, Black had very personal reasons for being interested, as he might be held jointly responsible for future issues arising out of the question. There is no reason to believe that Buchanan had any idea of committing himself in any way on the status of South Carolina. Black feared a misconstruction.

Black objected to "the deep regret of the President that the Commissioners are not inclined to proceed with the business they came for."<sup>71</sup> This merely showed that Buchanan desired to encourage the delegation to try Congress and thus gain time for compromise. Black, however, desired the President to refrain from mentioning any such disappointment.

He objected to the phrase against State coercion, and advised the President that he could not legally pledge himself not to keep a free hand in regard to the forts.

The President on this point completely vindicated himself in the reply, but did not deny that there had been a mutual statement of policy at the time. Black also commended Anderson. On this point he later changed his mind. He also urged the President to make it clear that the move of Anderson could not in any way be construed as an aggressive act. All the way through he made the most of the right of the Federal Government to its property. An exhortation to reinforce Anderson followed the memorandum.

Speaking of the modified draft, Thompson said, in 1882:<sup>72</sup>

How or by whom it was done I cannot say. I noticed that it had been radically changed when I heard it read the last time.

<sup>71</sup> Crossed out on the original; much like paragraph 2 of Black's objections.

<sup>72</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, September 17, 1883.

and said so to the President, "Yes," he answered, "I have modified it somewhat." But I and my Southern colleagues never knew anything of the way in which the changes were made until I read Judge Black's statement today.

The Commissioners were not at all satisfied with the answer, and wrote a long note to the President in which they accused him of bad faith. The reception and rejection are described by Thomas:<sup>73</sup>

I remember distinctly that when their answer was received to the paper prepared from the memorandum for the President which Judge Black gave you, Mr. Thompson opened it and read it aloud to the Cabinet. Every man present immediately said that it was of such a character that the President could not receive it. The President, I think, was the last to speak. He said, "Let it be returned," and that settled it. . . . I did not hear him say "Reinforcements shall now be sent," as I see it stated that he did.

On the same day of Black's interview (Sunday, December 30) Trescot<sup>74</sup> again tried to persuade the President to restore the status. Toucey was also at the White House. Indeed, he seemed to be the only faithful friend of the President who did not flinch in the crisis. They both told Trescot that it would be impossible to haul down the flag in Charleston with Northern opinion at its present heat. Trescot took the idea that it might be possible to march the militia out of Moultrie and march Anderson in again. He then went to Hunter with the idea, and Hunter proposed it to the President.<sup>75</sup> It was in vain. Hunter came out saying:

"It is useless to repeat what passed. The case is hopeless. The President has changed his ground and will maintain it to the last extremity. Telegraph your people to sink vessels in the entrance of the harbor immediately. They have no time to lose."

The everlasting importuning of these men had forced the President into a more and more unconciliatory policy.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 4, 1881, by Burr.

<sup>74</sup> Crawford, "Fort Sumter," p. 159. Part of Crawford's inferences were incorrect. See account above.

<sup>75</sup> A. H. A., 1916, Vol. II, p. 530.

<sup>76</sup> The Commissioners now addressed their angry note to the President.—Crawford, *ibid.*, p. 159.

The departure of the Commissioners seemed to indicate to Buchanan the increased probability of the beginning of war which,

Mr. Burgess has lugged in the idea of Buchanan fearing assassination. ("Civil War and the Constitution," Vol. I, p. 86, New York, 1895.) This was a species of propaganda of the Republicans in 1860. As threats from the South were balanced by threats from the North, it could not have swayed Buchanan to the Southern side alone. Buchanan, like Jefferson and Seward, was not a combative man, but he had plenty of Christian fortitude and will power in doing what he thought was right. A plot to kidnap him has already received mention. It is probably true that he considered the possibilities of being murdered in office or more likely of being killed by hectoring and over-work, but it is equally true that, when he had time, he walked about at sunset, alone and unattended, on Pennsylvania Avenue during the last three months, where his large figure would have been an easy target to a ruffian "patriot." It will be shown that he rode up the street with Lincoln in his carriage a few days after the latter had yielded to the advice of friends to go in disguise through Baltimore. Furthermore, just after he refused to restore Anderson, he held his reception on New Year's as usual where he could have been shot as easily as McKinley at Buffalo. Speaking of this subject the correspondent of the *Herald* said (January 2):

"Notwithstanding the menaces of assassination and insult with which the President has been threatened by the valient General Webb and other swash-bucklers, he will as usual be accessible to his fellow citizens of all parties, have no guard but the consciousness of discharging his duty with singleness of heart and respect of the American people for the constituted authority of the land."

Speaking during the War of the threatened invasion of Lancaster by the Confederate army, when some were urging him to leave, he wrote to Black:

"For my own part I felt no alarm at the approach of the rebels and with the help of God should not have removed from Wheatland had I been surrounded by a hundred thousand of them. I have schooled my mind to meet the inevitable evils of life with Christian philosophy."—July 17, 1863, Black Papers, L. C.

It was this consolation and a striving to keep right with God that solaced him in the dark periods of his career.

To a man fond of public life and not free from vanity, the sacrifice of popular praise was most laudatory. For a man who disliked contention to refuse to justify the radicals of either side, and to undergo years of ostracism by part of his own community, for conscience sake and the desire to save his fellows from the madness of their own folly, was moral fortitude of the highest order.

In the period of trial he wrote:

"I would sacrifice my own life at any moment to save the Union, if such were the will of God. . . ." Moore, Vol. XI, p. 74.



with his slender resources and a discordant Congress, he felt very unable to conduct. The order for the sailing of the *Star of the West* and his statement to Holt, "It is now over, and re-inforcements<sup>77</sup> must now be sent," indicate that no further evidence is needed to show that had the President been once convinced that war was the only way out, he would have conducted it as best he could. But other forces were shortly to appear which were in direct harmony with his hopes and faith in peaceful adjustment. The expedition of the *Star of the West*, then, marks the low-water mark of the President's hope to save the existing Union.

The move of Anderson had brought down Buchanan's plans like a house of cards. He knew the character of the Commissioners, and he also knew that it was not to the advantage of the South to begin hostilities. Having sounded sentiment, he felt sure that all had gone as well as could be expected<sup>78</sup> and hopes for compromise were reasonably bright. His chief concern was over the possible break-up of his Cabinet, which he hoped to keep a unit to the end of his term.<sup>79</sup>

But Anderson's move had changed all this; had put him in a place where his intentions had been misconstrued, and had brought the country to the verge of war. Small wonder that he is reported to have said to the suggestion of promoting Anderson: "I will leave that for my successor to do."<sup>80</sup>

For him, the change was one of the greatest blunders that could have happened. He now had to make considerable realignment of policy, but not of purpose.

<sup>77</sup> Reenforcements were decided upon December 30. The boat sailed January 5th.

<sup>78</sup> Speaking of his policy in 1861, he said:

"In my message therefore of the 3d December I stated 'It is not believed that any attempt will be made to expel the United States from this property by force.' In this belief I was justified by the event—as there was no trouble until after Major Anderson retired from Moultrie to Fort Sumter as he had a right to do having first spiked his cannon and burned the gun carriages."—January 29, 1861.—Curtis, Vol. II, p. 532.

<sup>79</sup> Buchanan, p. III.

<sup>80</sup> Lossing, "Pictorial History of the Civil War," Vol. I, p. 281.

Lossing took part of his material from hostile newspapers, and the above remark may or may not be true. Lossing was hostile to Buchanan because of Cass of whom he made a hero in his book. Cass stayed at his house after the resignation.



## APPENDIX

EXCERPTS FROM A FEW LETTERS RECEIVED BY BUCHANAN AT THE  
CLOSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION <sup>1</sup>

I will do everything in my power to modify them [events in the South] as much as possible to arrest any hostile action during your administration. . . . I deeply regret the embarrassment which will surround you.—Slidell to Buchanan, November 11, 1860.

Slidell's attitude was not to be severely criticized. He had written a newspaper article saying that Lincoln would be more moderate than Seward, during the campaign of 1860. His break with Buchanan over Beauregard has been noted. Up to January 29th he was often in consultation with the President.

I think the South ought not to make this trouble during your term of office for you have always been their friend and they should stand by your administration to the last.—Cornelia Roosevelt to Buchanan, New York, November 5, 1860, H. S. P.

I cannot close this letter without bearing my testimony to the zealous and earnest devotion to the best interest of the country with which during a term of unexampled trial and trouble you have sought to discharge the duties of your high state.—DePhillips to Buchanan, Philadelphia, December 12, 1860, H. S. P.

Every Southern heart owes you a debt of gratitude.—A. P. Hayne to Buchanan, New York, December 22, 1860, H. S. P.

Toombs wants to know if Buchanan ordered Anderson to Sumter; says it is bad policy.—Washington, December 28, 1860, H. S. P.

Republicans desire Buchanan to begin war and thus escape blame: present Union cannot be preserved for it should have to be held by main force: hopes for two peaceful countries to unite in the future in case of foreign aggression.—V. C. Bradford to Buchanan, Philadelphia, January 3, 1861, H. S. P.

Governor Moore of Alabama:

Letter telling of the taking of the forts due to fear of action on the part of the Federal Government.—January 4, 1861, H. S. P.

<sup>1</sup> The Baker letters are from Joseph Baker, a lifelong intimate friend of Buchanan. He was at this time Collector of the Port at Philadelphia. Bradford and Phillips were both Philadelphia Democrats. Levi P. Bowen was a former Whig who had voted for Buchanan in 1856. He was on very good and frank terms with the President.

Letter from Isaac Sturgeon states:

That he fears danger to the arsenal in St. Louis.—January 6, 1861, H. S. P.

Mr. President, if you had been among us in the South and your kindred and destiny were here, you could not do less than we are doing. Let the voice of common justice save us from your condemnation.—Part of a Long Letter from William F. Sanford (Ala.), January 6, 1861, H. S. P.

France must have cotton: France cannot allow any power to disturb its production and transit. If necessary France must intervene.—Davis or Dawes to Buchanan, January 7, 1861, H. S. P.

I have just returned from a tour of preaching. . . . .  
 . . . Secession was carrying all before it. . . . .  
 . . . But as soon as your message made its appearance, the change in public sentiment was so manifest that the heart of the lovers of our blessed Union was made to rejoice.—Rev. P. A. Samson, Griffin, Ga., January 7, 1861, H. S. P.

There are few unconditional secessionists in Maryland, although there is no doubt of deep and universal sympathy for the South.—L. K. Bowen to Buchanan, Washington (Bowen was a native of Maryland), January 7, 1861, H. S. P.

. . . for we of the South elevated you to your present post by almost unanimous choice. . . . Washington would have had peace.—Taylor to Buchanan, Middleton, Miss., January 11, 1861, H. S. P.

Hopes no reinforcements: leave the matter to Congress "To withdraw the troops would overwhelm you and your administration:" choose another port of entry than South Carolina: Scott and Seward are together: "The general has not forgotten that you were a member of the Administration during which he 'partook of a hearty plate of soup' or your Greenburg speech." Scott would be a military dictator: Harvey of the New York Tribune is a bad man: Holt is with him.—Baker to Buchanan, January 11, 1861, H. S. P.

. . . your excellency is aware that the President of the United States without the express authority of Congress possesses no power to accept men and money for—Crossed out on the back of a letter [in Buchanan's writing] from Governor of New York tendering State aid against South, January 11, 1861, H. S. P.

Pickens a traitor; not expedient to protect property: civil authority ended: let Congress act.—Baker to Buchanan, January 12, 1861, H. S. P.

. . . whole people hereabout speak of your manly and patriotic course.—N. E. Paine to Buchanan, Rochester, January 13, 1861, H. S. P.

Wants the *Star of the West* to return: foresees doom of the administration if he doesn't send it back.—W. V. Bartlett to Buchanan, New York, January 15, 1861, H. S. P.

Coercion will destroy all hope and liberty. "We must have our rights, and if we are met by force in asserting them, why we must resist. That's the whole of it. . . . Let the South alone. We will take care of ourselves, and if best for us, we will come back to a just government, or if not we will leave it. One thing is certain; South Carolina is out of the good old thirteen."—J. G. W. Ramsey to Buchanan, Mecklenburg near Knoxville, Tenn., January 15, 1861, H. S. P.

. . . advise against the shedding of blood: constitution has been violated: if Congress had done its duty as on the tariff the States would have been retained.—H. A. Raines to Buchanan, Rush, Texas, January 20, 1861, H. S. P.

If you coerce, the Democratic party is gone. The Republicans will not be so anxious for war if they have to take the responsibility.—E. W. Willberger to Buchanan, Chicago, January 21, 1861, H. S. P.

Florida secession announced January 21, 1861.  
Received Yulee in person January 23, 1861.  
H. S. P.

V. S. Bradford of Philadelphia desires Buchanan to evacuate the forts.—January 25, 1861, H. S. P.

*Digest:* No hope for Union: whole system would be destroyed sooner or later if the South submits:  
Shall they go in peace or war?: reconstruction may follow peaceful separation: maintenance of the Constitution greater than Union: greater is the duty of keeping Republican institutions: if the North wants Union let it repeal hostile State laws . . . to save the South.

Writer says he is no politician.—Salem, Miss., January 28, 1861, H. S. P. Sent from Salem, Mass., to Buchanan.

Note from Senator Bigler, Slidell, and Hunter, anxious to avoid collision.

Let the *Brooklyn* succor the Fort if attacked.—January 29, 1861, H. S. P.

Louisiana not for secession: yet will not be driven. Approves Buchanan's course: first wrongs committed by the North.—Henry Baldwin, of Syracuse, N. Y., to Buchanan, writing from New Orleans, La., January 30, 1861, H. S. P.

Thomas J. Judge is commissioner from Alabama to negotiate for the transfer of Federal Property in that State:

Buchanan will only receive him as a private citizen, and has no power to act on the matter. C. C. Clay desires Buchanan to recognize the State before Lincoln makes war.

A religious letter:

"We are two peoples but may be friendly & useful to each other yet."—February 1, 1861. . . .

Another letter from Clay on February 5th:

Judge will not see Buchanan on the terms mentioned. Clay says the property belongs to Alabama: urges no reinforcements: recites long list of grievances against the North. crossed out portion says the letter of Judge was courteous: criticizes Scott and Black: advises Buchanan to trust his judgment and feelings, H. S. P.

Bowen is angry at Hicks and Davis (of Maryland); people say that they are for the Republicans: no need of fearing that Maryland will leave before the fourth of March: watch Virginia; (there are some indications that Buchanan was trying to use his influence in Maryland to stop the calling of a Constitutional Convention before Lincoln could come in); hopes the State will stand for Southern rights but also for Union.—February 1, 1861, H. S. P.

Maryland politics in chaos; the coming Convention will represent only a small body of the people:

"They will not move a step towards Secession unless Virginia encourages them."

Tells Buchanan not to worry over the Convention.—William Morris (Baltimore) to Buchanan, February 6, 1861, H. S. P.

Letter from a Federal officer in Pensacola says the seceders get the best out of the armistice: bad equipment in the fort: seceders lack discipline.—February 7, 1861, H. S. P.

Letter of February 28, 1861, says: now the batteries are much stronger at Pickens.—H. S. P.

A. B. Greenwood would have accepted the place of Secretary of Interior, but his State, to his disgust, seized the Little Rock Arsenal.—Greenwood to Buchanan, Washington, February 8, 1861, H. S. P.

Charles B. Pickens of Boston says that Buchanan's course saved the country.—February 11, 1861, H. S. P.

Money is abundant, but there is such want of confidence in the future that business is paralyzed. . . .—C. M. Macalaster, New York, February 13, 1861, H. S. P.

The passage of the Morrill Tariff Bill at this time a disastrous event.—H. M. Phillips (Philadelphia) to Buchanan, February 17, 1861, H. S. P.

Wikyoff threatens to use the *Herald* against Buchanan if he does not give Bennett an appointment.—Written about February 25, 1861.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bennett did later receive an appointment from Lincoln and joined his cause. He refused the appointment but felt very grateful for the offer. Shortly after this he attacked Buchanan, thus laying the basis for future historians.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PASSING OF AN ERA

The Passing of an Era—Preparation of the Message of January 8th—The Changed Conditions and the President's Policy—The Message and its Effect—Evidences of the Continued Adherence of Buchanan to His Earlier Views—The Peace Conference, its Effect on the President's Policy, its Course, Cause of Failure—Separation of Buchanan from the South, its Cause and Degree—The Inauguration of Lincoln—Buchanan's Return to Wheatlands—Policy of the New Administration—Buchanan's Position During the War.

The New Year did not dawn brightly. The reply to the South Carolina Commissioners and Buchanan's refusal to receive their note, brought the country nearer than before to the civil conflict. Hope, however, though temporarily shadowed, had not vanished in the heart of the older generation, who hoped to the last that a rent in the Union could be averted. On January 2d reinforcements were ordered to Fort Sumter, and as a result Thompson resigned a few days later.<sup>1</sup>

Trescot believes that Toombs' statement to Buchanan that Georgia would secede upon his failure to send Anderson back to Moultrie had considerable effect. It would seem, however, that it was one of many events that changed the political horizon. The hostility of South Carolina over the move of Anderson, the increased excitement on the Gulf States, made Buchanan more anxious for Congressional support. He still hoped, and correctly so, for the adherence of large border States to the Union on the basis of non-coercion. They did not disappoint him, but it now

<sup>1</sup> The *Tribune* began to turn for coercion about January 3d. See part on Thompson for details.

Although Buchanan offered the vacancy to different persons only one, Mr. A. B. Greenwood, would take it. His State, Arkansas, seceded, to his disgust, and thus made it impossible for him to accept. For the remainder of the term Moses Kelly, the chief clerk of the Department ably performed the duties of the office. It was perfectly plain to Buchanan that he had to use much tact in keeping his Cabinet together until the end of his term.

appeared evident that the Gulf States were becoming disaffected. (It will be shown, however, that no mental change had taken place on his main hope for solution of the difficulties.) With the horizon black with clouds, Buchanan began to prepare his message.

The President and Cabinet went to work with a will. Thomas remarked: <sup>2</sup>

The Cabinet was then almost constantly in session, and the bulk of the message was written paragraph by paragraph in the presence of the Cabinet, and discussed as it was prepared. I remember on the 7th . . . we were closing it up. . . .

On January 4th Thompson put his advice in writing. It is a very able and important historical document. It is also one of the most interesting side lights on the President's attitude and his points of variance with his Secretary.

Washington, D. C.,  
January 4, 1861.

To His Excellency James Buchanan  
President of the U. S.

Sir:

On yesterday you read a proposed message to the Senate and House of Representatives, in which you transmitted correspondence with the Commissioners of South Carolina. As one of your constitutional advisers, I am called upon to say, what ought to be contained in that message, and although you have not asked my opinion in writing, I hope you will pardon the suggestion on that subject, which I feel it my duty to you, and to the country, now to make.

The time has come when the great issue of this Age should be met squarely and firmly. A temporizing policy is tantamount to destruction. You have been officially notified that South Carolina has, in fact, withdrawn from this Confederacy and this day claims to be an independent, foreign State. It is also well known that four other States are ready to declare their separation. It is also well known that a pervading sense of insecurity disquiets the public mind in ten other States, and they are contemplating the question of uniting their destiny with these States. You may shut your eyes and close your ears, and say, "I cannot and do not know these facts officially, or knowing them, I have no power to recognize them as facts. That either South Carolina nor any other State has the constitutional right to secede is a mere nullity." Be it so. Still without authority she declares herself an inde-

<sup>2</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 14, 1881, by Burr.



pendent Sovereignty, even admit the absurdity that her Government is in open rebellion against this Government. That then is your duty as the Chief Magistrate of this Union, you are bound, from time to time to furnish Congress with all the information in your possession touching the States of the Union,—and therefore in laying your correspondence with the South Carolina before Congress.

I would seize the occasion to bring the whole subject to their attention. I would inform them, that the idea of enforcing the laws in those seceding States is wholly inconsistent with the obligation of ensuring the domestic tranquility, of providing for the general welfare, and of securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. That although the State may have no constitutional power to withdraw from the Union, yet she has undertaken to do that very thing, and Congress possesses no power to coerce her to return into the Union. That this General Government and all Government in America, is based on the consent of the people, and it can only be held together by the chains of reciprocal good will and affection. According to existing laws, all duties can be collected only in the Port of Charleston. The Port of Charleston extends only to the waterfront within the corporate limits of that city. It is in vain for you to send your Collector to a people who consider themselves no longer within your jurisdiction. Your sending him only incurs insult and derision. If he goes, you must clothe him with power to coerce not the resistance of a lawless mob, but the authorities of an organized government. It is in vain to think you are only enforcing the laws upon individuals, because you would meet no resistance which was not organized and directed by the Government. It would be a palpable evasion of the Constitution of the United States, which rests in Congress the sole power of declaring or making war. This act, which would be considered war by all the Nations of the World, I would not perform it. If a brother's blood is to be shed, let those who have the wickedness as well as the power and the will, take the responsibility. I would wash my hands of such a sacrilegious deed.

As Congress has no power to coerce a State to submission to this Government—has no power by the military arm to force her to undo her unlawful acts, and as the collection of the revenue by a superior force would be nothing short of subjugation, what then is left to be done?

Having brought the whole subject to the attention of Congress, I, as President of the whole Union, would appeal to them by all the considerations of patriotism of a common inheritance, a common

glory in the past, a common pride in the present greatness of this Country, and the incalculable blessings in acts of civilization and religion in store for the generations yet to come, to secure the discontented States in all their rights of property. The Southern States have been insulted and wronged, and a majority section has elected rulers on principles hostile to their domestic peace and safety.

Having ascertained the Source and extent of the distrust and insecurity, I would call upon Congress to forget party, to merge their prejudices in their love of country, its liberties, and its glorious institutions by giving the amplest guarantees for protection of the rights of all.

But if we are already two peoples, if sectional hate is so strongly and deep rooted that the two great sections of this Country cannot longer live together in peace, by securing to each a full measure of justice, then, before I would pursue a line of policy which would inevitably inaugurate a civil war, and thus force you to imbrue your hands in the blood of your fellow citizens, I would recommend to Congress the adoption of measures for the peaceable separation of these States and a free election should be secured to each State to determine for herself in what division of States she would cast her lot. Thus prosperity would be secured, individual prosperity and happiness would be uninterrupted, peace, religion, civilization and the great onward moral spectacle would be presented of a mighty revolution effected by public opinion without shedding a drop of blood. Such a revolution would be the grandest triumph of the nineteenth century. I think you might even draw Hope from despair. When the sisterhood of States come together to draw up the articles of separation, their natural love and affection might still prevail and save the rights of all, and thereby save the Union of these States.

I have made these suggestions with a scrupulous regard to your previous position taken in your message. I have not said one word having reference to my own peculiar views with regard to the right of secession, and I have consulted no one in regards to this but a single member of your cabinet who I think approves them as worthy of the crisis.

With highest consideration,

Your friend,

J. THOMPSON.

The message,<sup>3</sup> however, followed a somewhat different direction. On December 3d Buchanan had declared secession to be revolu-

<sup>3</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 94-98.

tion; he now informed Congress that the country was in the midst of a revolution, and extraordinary measures were needed at once. Buchanan exhibited broken-heartedness over the thought of the Union going to destruction. The idea of Americans killing each other in mortal strife filled his eyes with tears as he entreated Congress to forget party, and do something to help save the country. He declared himself ready to act as vigorously on the defensive as his means permitted. He again uttered one of the chief features of his policy: Time is a great conservative power: and urged Congress to direct its attention to some sort of prompt action while peace still lasted. He set forth his defensive policy regarding the ports in the South, and justified it. No one can read these two messages and doubt Buchanan's honest devotion to the Union he had served so long.

The drift of the more radical portions of the South away from the Administration, having begun in December, now continued. The reply to the South Carolina Commissioners had given it impetus. The appointment of Holt had evoked wrath.<sup>4</sup> On the 2d of January, Seward suggested a call on the President. Old faces vanished, and new ones appeared at the White House. Wise wrathfully declared:

Mr. Buchanan's new allies, the Black Republicans and coercion Democrats, his latter day friends, who now applaud his policy and who but lately denounced his efforts to preserve peace, urge that South Carolina is the wrong-doer that she is the party that has begun the war.<sup>5</sup>

The President's military policy has been ably summarized in his very able reply to General Scott in 1862.<sup>6</sup> A brief summary of his policy follows here, in a letter to Holt written in 1861:<sup>7</sup>

WHEATLAND, 16 MARCH, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have received yours of the 14th instant & it has afforded me much gratification. The rumors to which I referred were that you had said Fort Sumter could & would have been reinforced

<sup>4</sup> *E. g.*, A. H. A., 1911, Vol. II, p. 528.

<sup>5</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, January 5, 1861.

<sup>6</sup> See Moore, Vol. XI, p. 279.

<sup>7</sup> Holt Papers, L. C.; also Moore, Vol. XI, p. 171.

thirty days before the end of my administration but I had prevented &c. &c. &c. Both Judge Black & Mr. Stanton have written me that Mr. Seward had shown them written comments on your note to Mr. Lincoln accompanying Major Anderson's Dispatches. If that memory be correct, the General has placed himself in an awkward position as papers in my possession will prove as well as your letter concerning Thompson. I wish you could occasionally see the members of the old Cabinet & converse with them.

I have never swerved to the right or to the left from the policy enunciated in my last annual message. Soon after I learned that the collector at Charleston had resigned, I nominated a successor; but no action was taken upon the nomination. Intensely anxious that no collision should occur at Charleston which might precipitate the Country into Civil War, I was yet ever ready & willing to send reinforcements to Major Anderson had he requested them. Indeed I did this without his request on the suggestion of General Scott at what was deemed a critical moment. The Star of the West was only happy in one respect & that is that she was not sunk & no blood was shed.

Then came the Peace Convention & the earnest appeal of the Legislature of Virginia to me & to the authorities of the Seceding States "to agree to abstain pending the proceedings contemplated by the action of this General Assembly, from any & all acts calculated to produce a collision of arms between the States & the Government of the United States." This agreement I refused peremptorily to enter into; notwithstanding Mr. Tyler said in his report to the Governor of Virginia; "that her efforts to reconstruct & to preserve depended for their success on her being permitted to conduct them undisturbed by outside collision." "He [I] replied that he [I] had in no manner changed his views as presented in his annual Message & that he could give no pledges; that it was his duty to enforce the laws & the whole power rested with Congress."

In truth at all times & under all circumstances & to all persons I kept myself entirely free to reinforce Major Anderson whenever the exigency might require. In your letters to Col. Hayne of the 26 January & 6 February you tell him explicitly that "At the present moment, it is not deemed necessary to reinforce Major Anderson because he makes no such request & feels quite secure in his position. *Should his safety however require reinforcements, every effort will be made to supply them.*" In your letter of the 6 Feb. you are still more explicit on this subject.

General Scott, to my knowledge, never submitted any plan on paper for the reinforcement of Fort Sumter. Indeed, he told me at

a late period that he had never read Major Anderson's Dispatches; & I advised him by all means to do so. His note to me on Sunday the 30th December to send the 250 recruits from New York which resulted in the expedition of the *Star of the West* is a curiosity, which I shall preserve both for defence & as a memento. The expedition prepared at New York under his auspices to be ready in case of emergency, I know little of in detail. Of course it was blown up by Major Anderson's Dispatches received on the 4th March.

I would thank you to send me a copy of your communication to President Lincoln of the 5th March.

We are living here in peace & quiet where we should be most happy to see you. I have no trouble except that I may be called upon to defend myself against an assault from General Scott & Mr. Lincoln's administration.

I am glad with all my heart that its policy seems to be pacific; because I believe that no other policy can preserve & restore the Union. Mr. Lincoln may now make an enviable name for himself & perhaps restore the Union.

Miss Lane desires to be kindly remembered to you.

From your friend

very respectfully

HON. JOSEPH HOLT.

JAMES BUCHANAN.

P.S. I find among my papers the enclosed copy of a letter from Gov. Pickens to Major Anderson of the 11th Jan. together with the Major's answer of the same date, & also Major Anderson's letter of the 12th Jan. They belong to the War Department & ought to be returned there. They have been long since published. I do not know how they came into my possession.

Anyone reading Buchanan's reply to Scott will note that it was Scott and Holt who considered it expedient to substitute the *Star of the West* for the *Brooklyn*. Major Anderson agreed upon a truce with Governor Pickens in order to send a messenger to Washington to see what the move really meant. Buchanan was not pleased with this idea, but decided to allow it to stand.<sup>8</sup> Hayne was restrained from handing in his letter by the intervention of Slidell, Fitzpatrick and Mallory. In the meanwhile a very hopeful event took place. Virginia set forth her plan of having a

<sup>8</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 452 *et seq.*

peace convention and the venerable John Tyler came to Washington to tender the noble offer of mediation at this critical period.<sup>9</sup>

Hayne's mission (to the President from South Carolina) found the President standing firmly on his previous policy. It is pertinent to insert at this place some of the portions of a first draft of Holt's reply to Senators Slidell, Fitzpatrick, and Mallory who had requested that the President consider Hayne's letter from Pickens. It shows conclusively that the President was still actively formulating the policy of the Administration. Holt's abridged draft may be found in Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 126-141. Some of the omitted portions in the other draft are quoted below.<sup>10</sup>

Crossed out portion between the phrase "on the defensive" and "and to authorize" etc.

in protecting and preserving the public property of the United States and to make no aggression on the people of any State. This duty however he must perform because he has no right to make a voluntary surrender of the public property to any power, to any human power without the authority of Congress

In the next paragraph, after the words "United States" phrase crossed out is

wholly independent of any question of State coercion.

Then follows a whole crossed out paragraph as follows:

Should South Carolina attack Fort Sumter this to employ your own language [*will be to employ in your own language* is crossed out] "initiating hostilities" between her and the United States. South Carolina may if she should deem it ever, in the present condition of the country to make war upon the United States Fort Sumter, but should she do this it will be a war of aggression on her part against the United States and not a war of coercion on the part of Congress the United States to compel her to remain in or return to the Union.<sup>11</sup> The two cases are entirely distinct.

On the margin of the same sheet also crossed out is the following:

<sup>9</sup> L. G. Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Vol. II, p. 587 *et seq.* The best account of the Peace Conference.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 130, H. S. P.

<sup>11</sup> Notice Black's opinion, Nov. 20th.



This will be on his part making war against the United States for an independent cause & does not involve in the slightest degree the question of State Coercion.

"At the present moment" (then crossed out) "I am pleased" changed to: "it is not deemed necessary."  
After the word "reinforcements"

they shall be sent although the harbor of Charleston has been obstructed in such a manner as to render access to Fort Sumter very difficult  
every effort will be made to supply them

After "South Carolina"

unless I possessed the power of Congress I could furnish no such assurance

After the words "war" and "it would be a vain pledge wholly unconstitutional" "an act of usurpation" "on my part," for the Executive "to pledge himself that they would or they" to give an assurance etc.

After the word "exist"

suffice it to say that they have hitherto exercised a wise and discreet forbearance on this subject although several of the States, some of them even before secession have initiated hostilities by seizing forts and other public property within their limits.<sup>11a</sup>

Major Anderson is not "threatening" menacing Charleston and it is the desire of my heart that the authorities of Charleston, South Carolina, may not precipitate hostilities, by perpetrating hostilities and cause the shedding of human blood in the necessary self defence of his position . . . and I am convinced. . . .

The document was signed "Holt," but the entire paper is in Buchanan's writing, and at times the word "I" is used.

Among other things the ideas which appear are: that Buchanan would not sympathize with the South in a war for independence; that he was against aggressive acts against the "seceded" States at that stage of the events; that he did not expect Major Anderson

<sup>11a</sup> This appears nearly the same in "Buchanan," p. 156.



to hand over the Fort without firing a shot;<sup>11b</sup> and that he still had strong hopes that peaceful settlement was on the way.

Had a movement for peace by Virginia not appeared, there is little doubt that another expedition would have gone for Sumter. Toucey had one prepared under the direction of a man named Ward.<sup>12</sup> Warships were stationed off Fort Pickens to aid in case of attack. This was the idea of Buchanan and Holt. Some of the rest of the Cabinet were for no delay, but Buchanan did not know it at the time.<sup>13</sup> The policy was highly successful. It prevented hostilities during the Peace Conference, and at the same time the Fort was never lost by the Federal authorities. The State, to its credit, also ceased preparations during the Peace Conference. There was no specific agreement given by either side, but both recognized a humane obligation.

The Old Dominion now made a glorious effort to prevent a "Brothers' War." This effort was begun in the middle of January. The venerable John Tyler arrived in Washington to interview Buchanan, and to request him to place the idea before Congress and in the meanwhile suspend hostile operations. While

<sup>11b</sup> The above statement is further proved by the following extract which King took from his diary and put in his book "Turning on the Light," p. 45:

"February 19. In Cabinet today the principal matter presented was an inquiry from Major Anderson, in charge of Fort Sumter, at Charleston, what he should do in the event of the floating battery understood to have been constructed at Charleston being towed toward the fort with the evident purpose of attack. The President wished time to consider. Mr. Holt asked what he would do, or rather what Major Anderson ought to do, in case he were in charge of a fort and the enemy should commence undermining it. The President answered that he should 'crack away at them.' The President, however, is very reluctant to fire the first gun. The Peace Convention, he said, was now in session in this city, and its president, ex-President Tyler, had this morning assured him that no attack would be made on the fort. The President expressed the opinion that the fort would eventually be taken."

<sup>12</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 620-622.

<sup>13</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 212.

The fleet could not have gotten near during high sea, but a shot by the State would have made the fort another Sumter, and the fleet then would have shelled the fort at the first opportunity.

Buchanan refused to make any promises which might tie his hands in regard to Fort Sumter,<sup>14</sup> he welcomed the move at such a critical period with unaffected gratitude. President and ex-President worked and hoped for a peaceful outcome.

Mrs. Tyler wrote:

Mr. Buchanan (the President) spent the evening in our parlor evening before last. . . . He first wrote the President a letter full of gratitude for the relief he had afforded him in probably preventing, through his influence at Charleston, the attack on Fort Sumter. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Buchanan sent an able and hopeful message, accompanying the Resolutions, to Congress urging them to forward the cause of compromise, and to abstain from acts of violence while such efforts were in progress.<sup>16</sup> An interesting letter on the situation is here inserted written by the brother of Major Anderson, who had been both at Charleston and Washington, and thus saw both sides of the situation at first hand.<sup>17</sup>

My dear Brother

I am still here. I wish to go home, but cannot make up my mind to do so—so long as I see any chance of doing good. I do not know how far my efforts to ameliorate your condition, & keep the peace for awhile, in hopes of a pacific settlement, may have been successful. I fear that you may not enjoy the full benefits intended—that the relaxations are not real reliefs & that there is more promise than performance in your market facilities. I trust that I am deceived in this apprehension. The principal relief, I suppose, that could be afforded you, would be the suspension of hostile proceedings in your neighborhood. Whether this can be accomplished or not, I do not know. It may be I believe, but I am not yet aware of the proper agency. What the steps now taken by Virginia will result in, is a matter of conjecture, but there is hope in them of general good. I do not like it that you should be left without reinforcements, but, under the present circumstances I do not see how it can be done without producing an immediate break-out of war, which something, that may evolve

<sup>14</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> L. G. Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Vol. II, p. 613.

<sup>16</sup> Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 113-119. Kentucky Resolutions, Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 124-125.

<sup>17</sup> Marked, "Received Jan. 24, 1861."

itself within the next Forty days, might prevent. It is clear to me that the ultra-Republicans wish a collision, while the lovers of Union desire more time for conciliation—not from Congress but from the people. In the *meanwhile* you are left in the most difficult & delicate of positions—God grant you wisdom still to do the part of a soldier, a patriot, & a Christian.

Mr. Crittenden is said to have made a glorious speech in secret Session yesterday, in which he vindicated you, from some criticism, in the handsomest and most eloquent manner. It was on the subject of the confirmation of Mr. Holt's nomination as Secy of War. He paid high compliments to Mr. H. also. The nomination was confirmed by a large majority. If the need of aid, for your security, is greater than the need of time, for the keeping off of war, I doubt not what would be the result. Your wife writes me in better spirits.

I commend you to our Father in Heaven,—may he bless & keep you.

The Genl was too unwell—with Influenza—to see me today. He always speaks of you as if you were his son. Ever your Bro.  
L. A.

Just before the calling of the convention the guns of Fort Monroe<sup>18</sup> were turned in the direction of Virginia. Tyler naturally protested this act at a time when he was doing all in his power to preserve the peace.<sup>19</sup> At this time Buchanan wrote Holt the following letter: <sup>20</sup>

WASHINGTON, 30 JANUARY, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR:

It is time we should have decided whether it is practicable, with the means in our power, considering the obstacles enterposed in the harbor of Charleston to reinforce Major Anderson at Fort Sumter, should the action of the authorities of South Carolina or his request render this necessary. The high military attainment and just reputation of Lieutenant General Scott render his advice on this subject of the greatest importance. Should reinforcement be deemed practicable, then in consultation with him a plan ought to be devised in advance to accomplish the object. I should be grateful to see General Scott, the Secretary of the Navy and yourself at 12 o'clock today or any other hour most convenient to

<sup>18</sup> See King, "Turning on the Light," pp. 58, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Tyler, "Letters and Times of Tylers," Vol. II, p. 591.

<sup>20</sup> Holt Papers, L. C. The draft in Moore does not say anything about Fort Monroe. Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 123, 124.

yourself to talk over this and other matters. On the evening of Mr. Tyler's departure (the 28th inst.) I received a note from him from which the following is an extract: "Will you pardon me for calling your attention to the rumors contained in the newspapers of the morning which state that active proceedings are in course of execution at Fortress Monroe, in planting cannon upon the Land side of the Fort with their muzzles turned landward and overlooking the country. If this be so, Mr. President, is such proceeding either appropriate or well timed? I shall do no more than call your attention to the circumstance and leave it with out comment with this single remark that when Virginia is making every possible effort to redeem and save the Union it is seemingly ungracious to have cannon levelled at her bosom." In my answer of the same evening I stated: "I shall make it a point to inquire tomorrow evening into the rumors in the newspapers to which you refer in relation to Fortress Monroe." I have made enquiries but without any specified result.

HON. J. HOLT.

Your friend very respectfully

JAMES BUCHANAN.

The Peace Congress continued until nearly the end of Buchanan's term. Attempts were made to continue a plan something like the Missouri line, which had failed in Congress, although sponsored by earnest patriots like Crittenden. It appears in spite of varying accounts <sup>21</sup> that it failed because the conciliatory group

<sup>21</sup> Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Vol. II, pp. 605-617; Buchanan, pp. 145-170.

Davis states that Buchanan through Hunter had consented to receive a commissioner from the Confederates to refer to Congress. Curtis denies this (Vol. II, pp. 487-489). Buchanan may have said something which led Hunter to hope for it while the Peace Convention was in session. Crawford arrived when prospects had fallen. Buchanan did not receive him. The whole matter rests with Senator Hunter. Crawford was very displeased at his lack of success, and wrote a characteristic attack on Buchanan.

In order to stifle any complaint for neglect, and because Black and Holt urged him, Buchanan and Scott scoured around and found a few troops mostly from West Point to act as a posse comitatus during Lincoln's Inauguration. Part of these arrived by February 22d when they prepared to parade. Tyler ("Letters and Times of the Tylers," p. 615), who felt handicapped in his peace efforts at such a display in Washington while he was directing the Peace Congress, protested and Buchanan ordered the parade to be cancelled. Sickles, however, protested to Buchanan and

of the Republicans could not get the radical wing into line. Tyler made a last plea for the President to remove the troops from Sumter which he, as in the case of previous requests, declined. Lincoln had by this time arrived. One of Buchanan's last acts was to sign the Morrill Tariff, although he was not entirely pleased with it. Stephens says that he found Buchanan had decided upon more protection in 1860. It was this problem that pushed Pennsylvania out of the Democratic column. A split might have occurred between the Northern and Southern portions of the party, had not slavery arisen, on the tariff question.

While neither Buchanan's philosophy nor his policy had changed since December, he and leaders of the South had drifted apart. While he cherished an earnest wish to avert the horrors of civil war, he seems to have felt that some of the Southern leaders had deserted him. For the sake of peace, and to give them a fair adjustment, he had breasted the radical portion of Northern opinion, and had told Davis he would not be surprised to find his home in ashes when he reached it.<sup>22</sup> Like Webster, he had sacrificed much, and he felt he had not been fairly dealt with. Speaking to Tyler in February,<sup>23</sup>

He complained that the South had not treated him properly; that they had made unnecessary demonstrations by seizing unprotected arsenals and forts, and thus perpetrating acts of useless bravado which had been quite as well let alone.

The following draft of a letter to Joshua Bates in England, written just after Sumter, reveals the same feelings:

. . . I was seventy years of age on the 23d April last and should be perfectly happy in my retirement were it not for the troubles of our country. As an American citizen I know you feel them deeply.

Holt that there was nothing unusual in it and the order to cancel the parade was rescinded. (King, "Turning on the Light," Chap. V).

There was opposition to having troops brought into the city made by some persons in Congress, just as others would have complained had none been brought. At Holt's suggestion Buchanan wrote a message of explanation (Moore, Vol. XI, pp. 152, 153). Talk of conspiracy was rife, but a committee found no conclusive evidence.

<sup>22</sup> Davis, "Rise and Fall of Confederate Government," p. 265, note.

The papers reported similar remarks. The idea that Buchanan always catered to public opinion is here refuted.

<sup>23</sup> Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Vol. II, p. 588.

The South had many grievances of which to complain, not from any action of the Federal Government, which had never done them the slightest actual injury, but from the intemperate zeal of the State Legislatures and abolitionists of the North, and their interference with the execution of the Fugitive Slave Law and with Southern Slavery generally. The time had arrived, however, when all this was passing away, and although Mr. Lincoln had been elected President, there was a majority in both Houses of Congress to sustain their Constitutional rights. Besides, the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States was in their favor. In the face of these facts, they determined to secede, and became intensely hostile to myself for having presented them in my annual message of December last. They repudiated my arguments against the claimed right of Secession, and rushed headlong to their own ruin whatever may be the final event. There still might have been hopes of reconstruction for the Union without employing force for this purpose, had they not causelessly commenced the war themselves by firing on Fort Sumter which was doing them no harm and was not intended to do them harm. This act has thoroughly aroused the North & united them almost as one man. Indeed it is estimated that three-fourths who have rushed to the defence of our time honored & glorious flag are Democrats who had always maintained constitutional rights of the South on the question of Domestic Slavery. I have observed with pain & regret the course of the British Government against us & in favor of the revolutionists & of the dismemberment of the Republic. It would seem that Louis Napoleon inclines to the opposite course.

To his nephew he also wrote often, saying that while all were for peace, they could not recognize independence.

They have behaved so badly as to have forfeited the regard of the masses of the Northern Democracy & I confess I sympathize with them in this respect.<sup>24</sup>

With equal zeal, however, he always believed in giving the South all her old rights if she would return to the Union.

At last the day of Lincoln's Inauguration arrived.

Buchanan spent most of the morning signing bills, then hurried to ride with Lincoln to the Inauguration. Apprehensions of violence had filled the minds of many. Speaking of the incident, a contemporary has said:

<sup>24</sup> Draft of letter, Buchanan to Henry, Buchanan, July 11, 1861, H. S. P.



The most timid of peace-loving Quakers, the presence of the outgoing side by side in the open barouche with the in-coming President, dispelled all fears of a day of war. Under the circumstances this ride of Buchanan with Lincoln was a courageous act of official courtesy. It was the exception to what the custom had been in such cases, and being unexpected it attracted the special notice and admiration of friends and foe.<sup>25</sup>

At last he was to be relieved of the burden of holding the government for a party whose policy was looked forward to with fear and dread by over a third of the country. Another contemporary speaking of him on this day remarked:

Buchanan appeared pale and wearied; yet his face beamed with radiance, for he felt relieved from the crushing care and anxiety which he had borne for four years during seasons of great peril.<sup>26</sup>

At the different towns through Maryland and southern Pennsylvania on Buchanan's homeward journey he received ovations. Before he left Washington he remarked, in regard to Southern opposition to Lincoln, that

he saw no occasion for it, as Mr. Lincoln really intended them well and he had reason to believe that the present administration would be a peaceful administration.<sup>27</sup>

Even at Lancaster, a town belonging to his political opponents, he was greeted with deep regard as one of the most distinguished men of his time.<sup>28</sup>

For a time his policy was continued, but at last Lincoln changed his ground.

Any person who cares to go into the subject, or even by glancing

<sup>25</sup> *Outlook*, Vol. 127, p. 218. "Honest Abe and the Little Giant," G. B. Wallis.

<sup>26</sup> *The American National*, Cleveland, Vol. II, pp. 824-825, edited by J. H. Kennedy; authors, B. J. Lossing, J. K. Upton, H. G. Riddle, J. V. Cooley.

The above article was probably by Lossing who was in Washington at the time.

<sup>27</sup> A very complete account is given in a paper published at Towson town, Maryland, found among Buchanan's papers. H. S. P.

<sup>28</sup> See Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 506-512, for his homecoming at Lancaster.



at the works of Tyler <sup>28a</sup> or Connor, <sup>28b</sup> can easily trace the steps by which Lincoln gradually came to favor the radical element in his party and decided on a policy liable to invoke hostilities. <sup>28c</sup> A radical Republican committee organized to criticize the government, after spending a page or so abusing Buchanan's policy, adding the following significant paragraph on its own administration:

Mr. Lincoln assumed the government on the fourth of March 1861; although the affairs were very threatening at the South and the insurrection was rapidly gaining ground, yet no measure seems to have been adopted and no movement made for the security of the yard until the 10th day of April. <sup>29</sup>

This is evidence that at first Lincoln and Seward considered it wise to follow Buchanan's policy. The change later was due to radical pressure in their own party.

During the war which followed, Buchanan as a citizen in the North, gave the government loyal support. His attitude was well summarized by John Sherman, who was a personal rather than a political friend:

He said he had done all he could to prevent the war but now that it was upon us, it was the duty of all patriotic people to make it a success, that he approved all that had been done by Mr. Lincoln of whom he spoke in high terms of praise. <sup>30</sup>

He gave subscriptions for the Soldiers' Relief, sustained the Draft Law, wrote the history of his Administration, and took an active interest in politics up to the week of his death. Indeed, the last part of his life was not uninteresting but it does not fall within the scope of this study.

<sup>28a</sup> L. G. Tyler, "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Richmond, 1885.

<sup>28b</sup> Henry G. Connor. John Archibald Campbell, New York, 1921. Mary Scrugham, "Peaceable Americans," 1860-61, New York, 1922.

<sup>28c</sup> *E.g.*, see quotations in Grierson's "Lincoln the Practical Mystic."

In critical moments Lincoln had an excellent supply of intuition. Lincoln's motives were not in the main economic, but born of religious ideas. At times he seemed to leap into the dark, but his career shows that these acts were of the nature of an inspiration.

<sup>29</sup> 37th Congress, 2d session, Senate Report No. 37, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> John Sherman, "Recollections of Forty Years," New York, 1895.

This did not mean that he favored all of his political policies by any means. Buchanan remained a Democrat to the last.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME SALIENT POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Some Salient Points and Conclusions—Buchanan's Policy a Success—His Characteristics—Economic Interests—Two Vital Factors of Conduct, Political Ideals and Religious Convictions—The Theory of Natural Rights—The Machinery of Union—State Rights in 1867—The Federal Compact, the True Basis of the Union as Instituted by the Founders—Buchanan's Religious Nature and Its Inevitable Influence on His Policy—No Other Course Psychologically Possible—Observations on the Civil War—A Tribute and an Appeal.

Buchanan had every reason to congratulate himself on the success of his policy.<sup>1</sup> His main aim, to give things a peaceful direction, and prevent the opening of a terrible "Brothers' War," had been accomplished midst terrific difficulties. At the same time, he had held the Northern members of his Cabinet in his cabinet save one, thus preventing the disintegration of his Administration. No official recognition had been given the seceded States, so that his successor was under no commitment in that regard. Some Federal property had been taken, but other points had been reinforced. No stone had been left unturned to promote measures of compromise that would be fair to all concerned. The

<sup>1</sup> A conservative Northern writer, who took Buchanan to task for his too favorable attitude toward coercion, sums up his position in 1860 as follows:

"... His condition as President at that time was a very trying and perplexing one. Elected as a Democrat upon principles that always gave satisfaction to the people of the Southern States, it is not to be supposed that he would desire to fight with the South the battle of the Republican party. The genuine Democratic party and the South had no quarrel; and James Buchanan, belonging to that school had none either. Should he provoke a war with the South during the remnant of his term of office? Surely not. He and his party had done all in their power to avert the calamity then coming upon the country, and were able to settle the troubles if they had the power. But that had passed from their hands, and it was the new power that the South designed to resist. Not the nation did they mean to resist, but simply the power of the Republican party."—Harris, "Biog. Hist. of Lancaster County," p. 112.

public was rapidly becoming quieted and reconciled to the idea that the Union could be saved without a "Brothers' War." The President had also escaped the pitfalls of the Republicans, by standing firmly on his constitutional prerogatives, both in dealing with Congress and the Southern States. Few men beset by so many chances of pitfall have ever managed to extricate themselves so skillfully.

In the social realm of public affairs Buchanan's Administration has had few rivals. Miss Harriet Lane ranks as one of the most famous of the "First Ladies of the Land."<sup>2</sup> At Lancaster, Buchanan kept open house with democratic simplicity; at Washington his levees were like those of a European Monarch.<sup>3</sup>

Buchanan was a born courtier. In spite of the fact that he carried his head on one side, due to oblique eyesight, he was a distinguished-looking man.<sup>4</sup> Being a master of the art of conversation,<sup>5</sup> he was a social favorite. Even one of his worst critics, Von Holst, admits that he was a perfect gentleman.

The chief characteristics that Buchanan manifested in his public and private career seem to me to have been: a strong sense of duty, manifesting itself in a desire to promote the general welfare of America as he understood it; strong religious feeling and sense of accountability to the Deity for his acts; humaneness, gentleness, a tendency to forgive rather than to blame, thrift without meanness, suavity combined with quiet persistence, and the knack of getting his way without seeming to do so; quiet but invincible obstinacy in holding to his lines of policy; great circumspection and prudence, combined with a genius for intrigue and organizing ability, which made him a political leader; a strong memory, combined with a natural gift for dialectic reasoning, which made him an able lawyer and diplomat. By temperament he was well balanced, sometimes swayed by sentiment, but never by passion. All of these characteristics served to make him an ideal public servant.

Another reason for his policy was his concern over the eco-

<sup>2</sup> Laura Holloway, "Ladies of the White House," pp. 498-525.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515.

<sup>4</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 672.

<sup>5</sup> A. D. White's Autobiography, Vol. I, pp. 72-73.

nomie ruin that war would bring upon the country. James Buchanan, thrifty and reasonably well off in worldly goods, was bound to notice this phase of the question in more detail than Abraham Lincoln, who was never a business success. Buchanan had, in 1856-1857, a private income of about six thousand dollars a year. His wealth, the result of inheritance, and judicious investments (he did not speculate), made from the large returns of his legal practice, which had enabled him to retire before forty. Thrifty and exact in his personal expenditures, he was extremely honest, taking great care in reporting all his items of personal tax, and in keeping his accounts to the last cent. On the other hand, he was a very humane creditor, and ready to give to worthy causes of charity.

To those persons who hold that economic motives are the determining factor in human conduct, there could be no doubt of Buchanan's devotion to the Union. He held bonds on the seceding States which, of course, became valueless after their secession. He also owned property in southern Pennsylvania, which was overrun by the enemy during the war.

Most of his wealth at the time of his death was in railroad bonds and mortgages. His total estate was valued at three hundred thousand dollars which was rather a good income in those days.<sup>6</sup> Not even his worst foes could find a flaw in his integrity. He spent more when in the White House than he received from his salary.

On the back of a paper he noted sentiments similar to those in his book, which bear out the remarks above.<sup>7</sup>

The result of civil war to preserve it doubtful and the bloodshed and burdens on the people  
 . . . doubtful whether the union could be preserved by civil war  
 and if it could the bloodshed, taxes, and disaster etc. it would  
 ensue.

Some impromptu speeches he made on a visit in North Carolina in 1859 showed the same attitude on the waste of war.

Throughout this study the attempt has been made to show that Buchanan's policy during his Administration was, in view of his

<sup>6</sup> Tables appeared in the local papers. Clippings, H. S. P.

<sup>7</sup> H. S. P.

past and professed opinions, not only natural but inevitable. By way of summary, a brief review of two phases of his thought will be presented to bring this assertion into strong relief. These elements were of the utmost importance in his life. They were: first, his political philosophy or creed, and, more important still, his religious nature.

An interesting manuscript, not dated, but which by its contents indicates that it was a draft of an address delivered some time before Buchanan became President,<sup>8</sup> gives an able and clear-cut commentary to Buchanan's political philosophy. It is the more important as it was not delivered on a political occasion, but at a commencement of Dickinson College. The main theme was the utility and necessity of education in a Democracy, and was a plea for State maintained secondary schools,—a topic discussed at that time in Pennsylvania. It is not labored like some of Buchanan's speeches, written to avoid attack, and is therefore a clear-cut expression of his views.

In the following passage will be found his idea of the "Natural Rights" philosophy, which had been popular as an historical as well as political truth in the days of '76.

To be kept in regular motion, the relative rights of the Union & of the States can only be preserved inviolate by an enlightened & intelligent people.

. . . Besides vice is the natural companion of ignorance. Although poets have presented to us the most glorious pictures of man in a state of nature, although they have described that state as the golden age of the human race; yet history & experience have taught us that these are but dreams of fancy & that man in his savage state is selfish & that his heart burns with fierce & ungovernable passions. Education is as necessary to correct his heart as to inform his understanding. Virtue & knowledge must unite & exert their joint influence over the American people, or our Republic must fall the prey to some factious demagogue or some military usurper.

Democracy, therefore, was to be won by long evolution and training. The Abolitionists were preaching that it was the birth-right of all, regardless of race or creed. The difference is ap-

<sup>8</sup> Probably in the forties or early fifties.

parent. In another portion of the speech Buchanan explained the whole system of Union as he understood it.

We became independent; and we have established the most perfect; but at the same time, the most complicated form of Government which the world ever witnessed. We have reduced into successful practice, that which had been considered impracticable, an imperium in imperio. We have constituted a General Government, to manage the common interest of the whole American people; whilst we have established twenty-four State sovereignties, to take care of the individual or separate interests of the people within their respective territorial jurisdiction. The attraction of the General Government ought to be no greater than is sufficient to preserve the States within their proper orbits. Should the day ever arrive when its influence shall become so powerful as to draw the States within its vortex, and to consolidate them with itself, the glory of our Republic will then be at an end. . . . On the other hand, disunion is equally to be dreaded with consolidation. The freedom and happiness of the American people are equally at war with both. Should the tendency towards disunion become too powerful to be controlled by the Federal Government, then the States

will run lawless through the void,  
Destroying others, by themselves destroyed.

This complex Government, in all its various branches, springs from the people, and must be sustained by the people. Each elector in this country is a sovereign, in the strictest sense of the word. He is answerable to no tribunal, but that of God and his own conscience, for his exercise of the right of suffrage. This nicely balanced machine, therefore, can only . . . (not clear) . . . State. Shall we patiently behold other States contesting for that moral power in the Union which must ever spring from knowledge, without making a single effort in the glorious cause of education. I trust not. I hope for better things.

The American System was a new political wonder. It was to be venerated and cherished. It was very evident to Buchanan, however, that it could not stand violent convulsions without giving up the spirit that made it. His prophetic prediction of the devastation which would be incurred in case of a civil war, wherein Pennsylvania would be another Flanders, was strikingly fulfilled.

The following statement was made in 1867. Therein Buchanan



shows the effect of the war period, together with the same abiding trust that the Democratic Party was still destined to play an important rôle in the history of the new Nation.

An attempt has been made to cast odium on the doctrine of State rights by falsely attributing to it the dangerous heresy of Secession. This never was a State right because entirely inconsistent with the very nature of the obligations into which all the States entered with each other by the Formation of the Federal Constitution. If admitted, it would make the Union a mere rope of Sand instead of a great and powerful Government. Happily the claim has now been forever extinguished. The Democratic party springs naturally out of the very essence of the Federal Constitution and must exist as long as it shall endure. Let any man take up the Bill of Rights which our ancestors deemed necessary to limit and restrict federal power and read it line by line and there he will see [not clear] embodied most of the principles of the Democratic party. I shall not go into the detail, having already proceeded much further than I had intended.<sup>9</sup>

Upon the nature of the Federal Compact, Black related the following in 1881.<sup>10</sup>

But after the election (1860) he asked me whether the arguments which had been used to favor the right of secession long ago in New England and South Carolina had made any impression on my mind. I replied, "None whatever." He said that he was extremely glad that I did not believe the Federal compact to be like an article of partnership between private persons which could be dissolved by anyone who was dissatisfied, and wished to retire from the business. I asked him how he could suppose that such an absurdity could get into my head. He said it had got into the heads of other men who were very sound on other subjects and instanced Rawle of Philadelphia. "But," he said, "no matter for that, we are in accord and that is enough. It is easy to demonstrate that this secession theory is without any logical or legal foundation." He said he was not without confidence that he could make the truth too clear to be resisted by the Southern men themselves.

On the other hand, in his message Buchanan held that if the North kept on violating the compact, it plainly constituted moral

<sup>9</sup> On the back of a dinner invitation, 1867.

<sup>10</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, August 21, 1881, by Burr.



justification for the South to secede. Rawle wrote, long before Calhoun. He was a Federalist, and a resident of Philadelphia.

Buchanan criticized the officers of West Point for joining the Confederacy:<sup>11</sup>

Whilst I can imagine why an officer might resign rather than shed the blood of citizens of his native state in war, yet it is difficult to excuse or palliate the next step which is to go over to the enemy and make war upon the time honored flag of the country.

This was unjust because Rawle's book<sup>12</sup> was used as a text-book at West Point, and taught the priority of state over Federal allegiance.

An incisive answer to the oft-repeated query as to what the "Fathers" thought, is contained in the following very valuable statement of Thompson. It throws into strong relief the attitude of Buchanan, Davis, and Black upon the problem that confronted them.

Davis was a Secessionist and never sought to disguise it. He was outspoken on all occasions. Black on the contrary, was bitterly opposed to it and was equally frank. Their arguments were long, frequent and exhaustive. His (Buchanan's) views too were well known to me. I have heard him express himself a hundred times and can define his position exactly. In reply to those who would urge the right of the States to secede he would say, "I find no such right declared in the Constitution."

When it was argued that no constitutional right was claimed, and that it was simply the right of a sovereign to withdraw from a compact, to secede from a confederation to whom certain rights had been granted, the reply would always be the same, "I find no such right laid down in the Constitution."

Our forefathers remembered that all governments since the world began were built up by force. They desired to build one founded on the affections of the people. They wanted a government that the people would love to serve, and as long as they loved it, it was easy to see that it would hold together. But beyond this they saw nothing.

"Therefore, gentlemen," the President would say, "you have no right to secede. But if you do secede, I do not know that we

<sup>11</sup> *National Intelligencer*, May 6, 1861.

<sup>12</sup> Wm. Polk, "Life of Leonidas Polk," Vol. I, p. 266.

Rawle was used as a text in 1825-7 and was no doubt available as a supplementary book until 1861.

can force you back in again. The Constitution gives us the power to enforce the laws, but that it also confers the broader power of forcing states which have voluntarily entered the Union to remain, I cannot say.”<sup>12a</sup>

Anyone who follows the hopes and fears of the men of 1789 cannot but see the correctness of this opinion. On the other hand, Buchanan saw the possibility that the North would not be minded to let the South go, and might try to hold the South by force, with a resulting war that would destroy the whole fabric and theory of Union. Hence, his zealous desire to settle the crisis without resort to war.<sup>13</sup> Only by peace and by mutual compromise and guarantees could the wonderful political structure based upon consent of the governed be preserved.<sup>13a</sup> The United States was a great experiment in the history of modern States, a great league based upon the voluntary consent of its members. It was an earnest devotion to this great and noble attempt in the field of political science that led Buchanan to strive to uphold it midst the tidal wave of sectional hatreds. No wonder then he was firmly convinced that the Union could not sustain the shock of internal strife among its component parts. Such a strife would in itself denote that its life-giving spirit had expired. In this sense Buchanan was the last President of that Union of the ante-bellum era. The Union was not restored until the Administration of Hayes, and then it was not the same, since the theory of the old system had passed away. The experiment of 1789 had been crushed.

<sup>12a</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, after Burr's article in *Black* in 1883, abridged from an article in the *Appeal* published at Memphis, Tenn.

<sup>13</sup> Just after resigning, Thompson wrote Cobb (*A. H. A.*, 1911, Vol. II, p. 533):

... "The President still adheres to his position that he has no power of coercion but he has a most curious idea that enforcing the laws at the point of the bayonet is not coercion. . . ."

This attitude was not inconsistent with his idea that Secession was a nullity, and was in harmony with his policy of defense and not aggression. Personally I have in another place expressed my disagreement with this idea as being the more desirable one for the time.

<sup>13a</sup> Neither was the theory inconsistent with his attitude after the fall of Sumter. In that case he held that war was begun by an attack against property belonging to the Federal Government. He had warned the South Carolinians of the effects of such an act while he was still President.

The other and more vital trait of Buchanan's psychology was his religious nature. No President of the United States was ever more religious than he. Rejoicing in tolerance,—he was even willing to send his niece to a Catholic school,—he subjected himself to the most severe religious introspection. As early as 1844 he wrote to his clerical brother:

I am a believer but not with that degree of firmness of faith calculated to exercise a controlling influence over my conduct. I ought constantly to pray "help thou my unbelief" *I think often and I think seriously of my latter end*; <sup>13b</sup> but when I pray (and I have preserved, and with the blessing of God shall preserve, this good habit from my parents) I can rarely keep my mind from wandering. I trust that the Almighty Father through the merits and atonement of His Son will yet vouchsafe me a clear and stronger faith than I possess. In the meantime I shall endeavor to do my duty in all the relations of life.

All his life <sup>14</sup> he was a church going, prayerful, Bible-reading man. He believed that religion should manifest itself in good works, and quietly gave aid to the unfortunate. While to a considerable extent a fatalist, he yet did not believe in all the Presbyterian tenets of predestination, and would have joined the Reformed Church because of the less severe Heidelberg catechism had not the elders told him his complete adherence would not be required. <sup>14a</sup>

In this study repeated citations have indicated the fact that Buchanan was aware that he was nearing life's inevitable close. His vitality was great, and he survived his term of office some eight years, but this was probably longer than he had anticipated. He was never a cruel man and very seldom a vindictive one. This religious-humane nature developed the natural idea that a "Brothers' War" was a crime,—a public murder. And Buchanan consequently made up his mind he would rather die than be guilty of the blood of his countrymen shed in civil strife. If

<sup>13b</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>14</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, pp. 678-679; also Maury, "Statesmen of America in 1846," published 1847, pp. 15-16.

<sup>14a</sup> W. Rush Gillan, "James Buchanan," Paper read before the Kittoctiney Historical Society of Franklin County, Chambersburg, Pa., 1900, pp. 21, 22.

they started it, he was free to defend, but the shedding of blood, he foresaw, meant a terrible war fatal to Union,—an act which he, above all others, was determined not to commit. This fact comes out publicly and clearly in his proclamation for a day of Prayer, which is like a text for his policy:

Let us implore him . . . and above all to save us from the horrors of civil war and blood guiltiness.

A more detailed statement of his determined policy appears in his message of January 8th:<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of these unhappy troubles I determined that no act of mine should increase the excitement in either section of the country. If the political conflict were to end in civil war, it was my determined purpose not to commence it or even to furnish an excuse for it by any act of this government. My opinions remain unchanged, that justice as well as sound policy requires us to seek a peaceful solution of the questions at issue between the North and the South.

In later years, it was his great solace, that he had done all he could to preserve the peace. Certainly no man could have felt more earnestly the solicitude for the welfare of his country, nor striven more earnestly to save it from destruction.

With certain fundamental political ideas which had been the result of years of reflection and matured conviction, with a certain concept of public duty growing out of religious ideas held since childhood, it was psychologically impossible for Buchanan to tread any other path.

Since the Civil War, nationalists have by diverse ways tried to undermine the theories of the ante-bellum period. Except to partisans, such attempts have but little value. There were representations of both parties in the convention that planned, and those later that ratified the Constitution. While some States accepted the instrument, they rejected the philosophy of nationalism by the manner of their ratification. Secession was always able to hold its own from the beginning as a Constitution dogma. It is plainer still that the Fathers had no intention of coercing a State in the mass. Had they read into the right to coerce individuals the broad construction applied in 1861, the Constitution

<sup>15</sup> Curtis, Vol. II, p. 435.

would never have been ratified. In defiance of Mr. Madison, the State of New York practically gave conditional ratification to the new scheme. The dread of the Fathers of civil war, their dread of despotism, their wish to found a Union on the consent of the governed, and the great force of State jealousy made a nationalistic idea, except to the very few, impossible.

The fanaticism, the commercial greed, which wanted to use the wealth of the South by holding her in the Union, together with the foolish exaltation of slavery by Southern radicals, coupled with the pride and the hot temper of the South, brought about a wild insanity which, through the course of peculiar events, led to the overthrow of sane advice, and plunged the Union into destruction.

The fact that the North finally decided to support Lincoln's government does not state the whole case. Many Democrats and border-State men, who would have refused to have abetted aggressive measures looking to a military invasion of a State, and who were working night and day to keep the peace, felt that all was in vain after the South Carolinians fired on Fort Sumter. The South has always held that Lincoln's act of sending reinforcements was the first act of war, and that they had a right to repel it. History, however, shows that while people sometimes have undoubted rights, it is sometimes advantageous to forego their exercise to secure more lasting benefits in the longer course of events. The Republicans were in no condition to push matters to conclusions, and the hope for suitable compromise and preservation had by no means perished. The psychological reaction drove the North towards War, just as Buchanan had told the South it would, and thus hope of peace and conciliation vanished.

The Civil War was a great misfortune to the country. The finely balanced machine set up in 1789 was wrecked. The new creation was only the same by courtesy of legal dicta, because it gave ear to new political theories and sought after the glitter of the new economic prosperity. The marked legal gains to the negro race were in sharp contrast to the new chaining of both races to a new economic order that was still more destructive of Jeffersonian political liberty, and from which the pretended relief is the still more binding chain of a despotic proletariat.

The trouble lies in the belief that material comfort is the only element of happiness. Commercialism is the despot of present-day America. This has led to centralization of everything, including the Government. America must learn the ideals of local self-determination all over, and also learn that the satisfactions of philosophy, art, political science, and religion are as interesting and worth while as those of commerce and increased production. The "Deserted Village," and "The Old Homestead" must be restored.

The fall of States Rights is as much due to the States themselves as to the grasping of the central government. Brought up to hold the States in terms of political contempt, modern legislators have sought to avoid their responsibilities, and secure quiet tenure of office by passing duties and problems to the central Government that they should have solved themselves. Let us hope that a new day is not far distant. In the meantime there is the opportunity to deal more gently with the statesmen of yesterday.

The inevitable animosities of Civil War have, and will yet for a generation, prevent the Northern Democrats from receiving their place in history. Eminent among this group stands James Buchanan. His intellect was of that profound type, equal to the best of his day, yet so clothed by a conservative temperament that he has received less pages in text books than some of his more spectacular contemporaries. Yet that same canny intellect made him rank among our ablest diplomats of his age, and made him one of the most astute political leaders our democracy has yet produced. His thoroughness and tireless industry made him one of the best of public functionaries; as a citizen he was a model of virtue; as a statesman he made duty his guiding star. His was a self-sacrificing devotion to the Constitution as he understood it. His attitude toward the people of the South was but the natural result of thirty years of friendly association. Peaceful by nature as Jefferson, and with a devotion to the Union like that of Webster, he sacrificed his political reputation, and at times risked personal danger to avert a needless and heartless "Brothers' War" followed by a cruel reconstruction. For this policy of self-abnegation, dictated by a sense of religious obligation to his fellowmen, James Buchanan is entitled to a generous judgment at the hands of a generous people.

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